THE BORDERLAND

An Idyll of Ridge Park

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The Borderland;

An Idyll

of Ridge Park.

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Author of "The Days of Makemic," "The Old Preacher's Story," Etc.

HUDSON-KIMBERLY PUBLISHING CO.
KANSAS CITY, U. S. A.
1901.

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To the Memory of

ELLEN;

And of all whose life and death have, like hers,
illuminated the Borderland and the Beyond.

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PREFACE.

There are here and there dear children of our Heavenly Father who are in bondage to the fear of death.

And there are excellent Christians who have lost the loved and fail to see the bright light.

While written also for general reading, for young and old, this book has the two former classes specially upon its heart. It is a pity that the privileges and power of our religion should be forfeited just when they are needed most and sweetest. We would love to impart cheerful views of death and the grave. The author has endeavored to do this—in an unusual way, perhaps, but in one truly philosophic. About the tomb of the child of God there is beauty, poetry, hope.

THE UNFORGETTING

We love the sleeping-places of our dead.
'Tis not so lonely here as in the crowd
Or 'mid the cares, ambitions, jars, and scars
Which once they shared with us and share no more.
Close to their sides the world is far less void
Than in the press of business and the whirl
Of social life or in the wounded home.
Therefore we come at pensive morn or eve
For memory's sake. 'Tis not to call them back
And break the peace of their celestial calm.
Oh! no; we would not call them back
Or interrupt their gentle resting—
To face again the storms of time
With pains and griefs and thorns infesting.
Be gently still, rebellious heart!
With you in sight, ye dear immortals,
We breathe the fragrance on the breeze
That blows from heaven's open portals.

We love to sit beside the quiet tomb
And meditate. The years come softly back
And open up green vistas through the past
Where rose and lily shed their rare perfumes.
There 's nothing morbid in our visits here.
We here recall fair brow and sparkling eye,
And hear the voice as in the happier time,
And hold communion, soul with kindred soul,
And say, Amen. 'Tis not to shed dark tears
And send rude protests upward to the Throne.
Oh! no; beyond the tempest's rage,
Contentedly and sweetly sleeping,
We would not dare disturb our dead
With sore complaint and reckless weeping.
In love a gracious Father rules,
And He hath given and hath taken;
The same kind Hand shall guard their dust
Till God shall call and they awaken.

We love to plant bright flowers around the graves
And see them smile. The dead enjoyed these blooms
Before they went where blossoms never fade.
The fragrance floats about the tomb and then
Takes wing and seems to mount and seek the stars.
The graveyard thus claims kinship with the skies
And thinks of gardens where the unwithering grows.
Yes, plant the beauteous things and let them bloom
Like those we loved. 'Tis not to make these tombs
Our idols and forget the calls of duty.
Oh! no; in cadences of love
There breathe about this hill of beauty
A hundred voices, tender-toned,
To sway the soul to grace and duty.
They urge us all to usefulness,
To comfort every troubled bosom,
To cheer the faint and serve the God
Who plants the life and plucks the blossom.

We love beside our dead to think of heaven
Expectantly. 'Tis easier here to get
Apart from earth and drop it all below
And seem to rise. The uplift here is strong
While holding fellowship with those on high—
So real, clear, with links that seem to draw.
Their presence in that land brings earth and sky
In neighborhood, until we see across
And loose the chains. 'Tis not to fret at life
Or death, and rail at chance or fate.
Oh! no; there is no fate or chance,
To cloud the tear-fall or the sighing;
A loving sceptre governs all,
And lights the bedside of the dying.
There is no chance, there is no fate;
In God's own time, on soaring pinion,
The trusting soul goes gladly home,
And graveyards own Divine dominion!

We love to take our places near our dead
And look ahead. 'Twill not be always thus—
The waveless sleep, the silences profound.
Above these mounds the trumpet shall be heard;
The Conqueror of death shall tread these aisles
And call, and slumbering ears shall hear.
These graves shall move, the buried shall come forth
All clothed with light and immortality.
Till then we wait. 'Tis not to mourn as those
Who have no hope, with plaints and broken hearts.
Oh! no; the hour comes sweetly on—
The opening graves, the beaming faces,
The salutations as we meet
With bounding hearts and fond embraces.
The Victor breaks the funeral bonds;
These grassy mounds their dead surrender,
And shouts of joy reverberate
And swell the resurrection splendor!

THE BORDERLAND;

THE IDYLL OF RIDGE PARK.

CHAPTER I.

Looking Across.

"About this hill there is a cheerfulness, a hopefulness, a sheen in the sunshine, peculiarly its own."

The speaker was elderly, thoughtful, with an open countenance full of the past. She was standing by the grave of her husband, buried six months before. The two had lived in happy wedlock for forty years. The softness of the pensive sunlight seemed to nestle among the grasses lovingly.

"There is little of sadness here, no hint of the gloom that wounds. God seems to have turned on the light."

The serenity upon the woman's brow was evidently a reflection of the radiance she saw.

This story is written among the tombs, but it is going to be the most cheerful of stories. The thrush now singing in the lithe ladylike Lombardy poplar will be singing through all of its chapters.

Once through the Southern moonlight we sat all night in charge of a beautiful Dixie girl, draped for the burial. When all was still, the best all-around singer of the world, a rare Louisiana mocking-bird, alighted upon the mimosa just out of the window, and sang soft requiems till the morning dawned. Never have we heard his equal in song.

While we write, the accustomed visitors are coming in the evening calm to tarry for awhile by favorite graves. It is their selected hour for restful meditation.

I see nothing morbid in the affectionate lingering. You hear no wail; you catch no murmur. Were it not for occasional habiliments of black, there is little in these placid pil-

grims to suggest the funereal. The faces are faces of love and anticipation.

And why should death interrupt companionship with the departed?

The dead are excellent neighbors. You may associate with them and meet no rasping word, no harsh tone. There are no critics here. They will not question your sincerity nor suspect your motives. They will not betray your confidence nor misrepresent your utterances. You may feel at ease in their company. No evil surmise, no ungenerous slander, will ever emerge from beneath the graveyard grass.

Resting yonder are three or four members of a household whose lips have ever been lips of peace. Parents and children and grandchildren have wounded the good name of none. They have a right to their repose. They will not learn to love and repeat scandal in the community of which they are now a part. For there are no tale-bearers here. Innocence may pass safely among the silent denizens and fear no gossip. No manly man need dread a slur; no lovely damsel need shrink from censures rude. And here our story may tarry, as among the purified and ascended, and run no risk of reproach from the inhabitants of this hill.

It was a typical evening in the thoughtful summer time. Its lace-work of haze curtained the Western sun, and the breeze from the South fanned the brow as with incense from an angel's wing. Grateful showers had come in the morning and gladdened the blossoms. Surrounding landscapes, variegated with meadow and maize, sent salutations of poesy and song. It was Nature's pensive hour, verging into sunset, and the vistas of Saline seemed to be thinking of the hills by the crystal river.

Over to the side of the cemetery, in one of its neatest spots, sat a young maiden watching, with their splendor in her eyes, the amber and gold flung up by the descending sun on fleecy clouds. The shafts of marble and granite and bronze were reflecting soberly the varying shades. There were no clouds on the damsel's face. For why should sunset bring sadness?

The brow must have caught some of their whiteness from the callas which she has placed upon the grave. Though her

bosom sighs not now, it moves the more deeply, perhaps, because of sighs in the past. The lips, very shapely, seem formed for sweet words.

For the young girl is beautiful. Many knew not which was the fairer and lovelier of the twins, the one above or the other below the ground. The latter carried to heaven with her a look of love and peace very like to that which rests upon the living sister's countenance now lifted upward. Submission and hopeful expectancy are always winsome—a chastened comeliness which is undreamed of in the ranks of the frivolous. There are no adornments like the tints reflected in the words, "Thy will be done."

And the maiden lingers in the transfiguring sunset, and meditates:

"There was no rarer life in all the land, the angel of the house. In such sisterhood, there are delights untold. To have lain together near the heart of the same mother, to have been fondled as little girls upon the same bosom, to have grown side by side under the same smiles, to have learned the lessons of joy and sorrow together, to have had the same visions of heaven—this was girlhood and the heart-world at their best. She irradiated everything. She was the white rose of our gardens.

"And she faded as the rose fades. The fragrance of an ideal life stayed and clarified to the end. Never had she smiled so sweetly as when she neared the portals.

"There is nothing upon earth more celestial than the smile of the home-bound!

"And so she passed away—immortality with spread wings. She had her sorrow, her romance, her disillusionment, the sting of destiny. So it has been, I suppose, with all those reposing here. A sister's heart-history is very sacred. It only brought a maturer loveliness.

"There was no recoil from the going. She kissed us all, and we knew the angels had come.

"There was a great vacancy, but it would have been selfish to stay the ascension. She loved these hills and valleys, but her dying visions gazed far away over others more glorious. The Savior, whom she had learned to know in her girlhood,

stood in open view as the King in His beauty and called her. She is like Him now, for she sees Him as He is.

"I go to her after awhile—she cannot come to us. It is pleasant to stay and to comfort her father and mother. They sent her these lilies. Her departure has not darkened the earth—it has brought an illumination. Paradise and its loves have their frontiers here.

"And God is very good. I know what one of His heroes meant when he was glad that he had been afflicted. I understand life's meanings and duties better. I know better how to brighten the pathway of others. Thinking of her, the heart quickens and softens. There is no eloquence like the eloquence of the graveyards."

Thus she sat in dress of gauzy white, her white sunbonnet thrown slightly back from her snowy brow—and the lilies claiming kinship. You would have thought of the white-robed by the throne.

Over on the opposite side of the large and populous enclosure, a young man was carefully decorating another family plot. The flowers seemed to come at his call. He was tall and noticeable—a substantial form and strong brow. A man does not have to be dwarfed in order to have sentiment. The eye was dark and lustrous with an undertone of tenderness—an eye such as maidens dream about.

While following his gentle task, Gilbert Wayne had frequently noticed the white sunbonnet. He thought it the whitest he had ever seen. He had lately read "The Lilac Sunbonnet," by Crockett, and had imbibed a fresh interest in the picturesque garb. To his eye the slight, quiet figure, true to someone who had gone, a companion of the ascended, was one to be remembered. Those true to their dead are not likely to be untrue to the living.

Once, after the unknown had left the grounds in the twilight, he had drifted over to the spot and found that no stone had been erected to reveal the family name. Was there a slight disappointment? Only the one word, "Martha," was wrought in growing foliage plants.

It is a pity that Gilbert could not have listened to the

young maiden's thoughts this evening. They were such as his inner life and the discords of his bosom seriously needed. A healthy soul is often the diseased soul's best tonic.

When his work was satisfactory, the touch of his robust hand upon the grave as delicate as a woman's, he took his seat nearer the head and his thoughts had their way:

"It hardly seems well that the young and innocent should be bruised; that one like yonder fair girl should be drooping among the mourners. What right has the dread destroyer to darken a destiny like that? Scepticism is a poor companion for the graveyard, but it is hard sometimes to believe that a Beneficent Being rules among the tombs.

"Why should mothers die? I saw a flash of furious lightning once, a fearful flash, a crash; the bolt had struck and in that moment a happy home was in ruins. So it is when mothers die!

"Why should the life of a son—young manhood needing woman's inspirations so badly—have been stripped and left without a guiding star? Never was there a grander woman. She loved her boy only as such women can. I was ambitious —ambitious for her sake. The incentive is gone!

"She was the queen of home. My old father has drooped ever since. Gray hairs came suddenly and fast. I cannot get him in sight of these grounds. He sends only this sprig of evergreen. The lightning has blighted the home.

"Oh, the problems which haunt the graveyards like ghosts! Why—why? By every tomb stand the wherefores, miserable phantoms, weird and mysterious. Is there a God? Wields He a righteous sceptre? Is there a Manager among the voiceless corpses? Is there a future to these burials?

"We plant—we water—we cultivate—it germinates—it blooms—and the blooms fade to-morrow! Where will all this beauty around us be when winter comes? And it is always winter when mothers die!

"And yonder is that defenceless girl, pierced too soon, broken-hearted among the shadows like one that is alone in the desert. It is cowardly in the King of Terrors to fling his blights over the frail and lovely and unarmored!

come tacitly a partner in kindred labors—their dead the tie? Were there mystic currents vibrating between, a wireless telegraph from soul to soul?

He moved from his seat to arrange again, and a little differently, the white rose blossoms. Another perilous wave of rebellion passed over him, with unwholesome thoughts like these:

"Why should mother and only son be parted? While she lived, I needed no other heart but hers. She was enough. They used to banter me about love and sweethearts and marriage—and sometimes she would join in, too, but where was there another woman that could equal her? I would never have married her inferior!

"Everything seems out of joint. Daily I see another mother fondling the resting-place of her only son. My mother gone—her son gone! These are the miscalculations of death. The whole life of that poor woman was centered in her boy. He was a noble youth, such as the world needs, a mother's boy with all which that rich phrase means. She saw a bright future beckoning. She already enjoyed his triumphs. And she was his pride as he was hers—each essential to the other. Talk of kings! To his parents he was more than royalty.

"Why this jumble of destinies? Why should they be left sonless and I motherless? If this be Fate, Fate is a blunderer.

"But doubt and complaint are poor comforters, worse than Job's; miserable decorations for graveyards. They are like ghouls that would ravage the repose of the dead. I have too much religion to believe in either fate or chance, and too little religion to see clearly the goodness of a loving God in these sunderings and tearings. The owner of that sunbonnet—perhaps she may even now be languishing in the grasp of some fatal malady.

"But there are some lovely things out here. A poet should write up yonder two little girls. The angel, who stands waiting to sound the final trump sees few fairer sights than the groups of children gathering here to adorn the places where their loved ones lie. The other day I saw a little boy, of his

own impulse, plucking wild flowers to scatter over his grandmother's grave. It was one of Ridge Park's masterpieces.

"That water-pot is too heavy for those wee girls, and I will help them. The grave is scarcely too long for one of their dolls. There are times when we withdraw from older acquaintances—grief is made that way—but little girls never jar upon the tried heart."

He went over and asked that he might assist the busy hands. They welcomed him gladly and he was glad. The graveyard brings all ages together. Little did he know how mightily this act of his was to affect his destiny.

They told him about their baby-brother and how God took him before the winter came; before the frosts began to fall. Sparklingly they repeated the radiant words: "Of such is the kingdom." The children a part of God's royal household. From their way of talking about it, you would not have thought that heaven was a mile above them. The children are the sages.

And Gilbert helped them, and they were to help him. It is an illogical inconsistency to love and trust children and suspect their God. Grown people once forbade them to go to their Savior. The children never forbid us.

The little graves are beautiful indeed and that one was a gem. The flowers seemed to assert kindredship to their human rivals. The little girlies, as lively as birds, were as much at home in this enclosure as in their play-grounds. These miniature ladies could point out all the baby graves in the cemetery.

They were grateful to the stranger, and felt free with him, and asked if he had little sisters and a mother. Then he led them across to his own lot, and said he was an orphan, and told of her who was sleeping there. They pitied him and put their arms about him—one on each side. The angels could have known no better what he needed.

And Mattie, the older, said—and his mother was named Mattie:

"All over the grounds there are tombs with 'Mattie' on them. It makes it seem home-like. We children need not be afraid."

And Margie, the younger, said: "I wonder if your mother knows, and if our brother knows, what we have been doing. I wonder if they enjoy being remembered."

"Of course they like it," answered the older sister, positively. "They love us still, and expect us to love them."

"It would be a strange heaven if they didn't," said Margie.

The minds of the young philosophers were already grappling with the great mysteries. To their thought there was no wide separation between the ascended and those left behind. Perhaps this was another of the secrets hid from the wise and prudent and revealed unto babes.

Gilbert was delighted with the prattle of his new friends. Some day he would thank God that they had come into his life. He felt now that he needed a faith like the faith of childhood —as we all do. Encouraging their confidence, he asked:

"Would you like to have your baby brother back? Wouldn't it be nicer to have him in the cradle than the grave?"

Mattie looked at him as if puzzled by words or manner— something in them which she did not understand. She replied slowly:

"But God took him, you know. Mamma used to lift him from the cradle to her bosom; so did God, you see."

Was he answered? Looking like a cherub herself, Margie said earnestly:

"It is only the little body that lies here."

If wicked enough, Gilbert might easily have confused and perplexed the young believers, but not for the world would he have thrown any of his clouds across their transparent beliefs. The man is not to be envied who would destroy the cheer of Christianity while impotent to supply an equal or superior balm. Who would willingly taint the faith of a child? But these young immortals seemed to detect some undercurrent of uncertainty in mien or tone. The unsophisticated heart is sensitive to the shadows.

"I love to hear you talk," he said. "For it is very real to you that all these buried people are living; and that God never did a single one of them any harm."

"Why, of course," answered Margie, promptly and emphat-

ically. With her it was indeed a matter of course. He enjoyed the emphasis. Mattie continued:

"They are all coming back after awhile, you know. It will be a grand time out here then. And our brother will say: 'Here I am, mamma!' And mamma will say, 'Come to my arms, my child!' "

"And you will be here also," he answered, "and will hasten to say: 'Here are your two faithful sisters.' "

It was pleasant to fall in line with their bright visions.

"I love to think of Jesus," said Margie, "standing up there on the porch of the chapel then and looking this way. And we will sing one of our Sunday-school hymns."

"Why don't you look delighted?" questioned Mattie. "You are too sad. I wish you could hear Cousin Margaret talk about these things."

"And who is Cousin Margaret?" he inquired, leading them on. "Is she some little girl as sweet as her two cousins?"

"Oh, sweeter!" answered Mattie. "Don't you know Cousin Margaret? She is our Sunday-school teacher and knows all about these things and the Bible and heaven and everything."

"Cousin Margaret is an angel," asserted Margie with characteristic positiveness; "especially when she gets her white organdie on."

"Is she old or young?" he asked. "And how did she learn so much about heaven?"

He was trying to keep them talking. He little suspected what an influence these simple things were to have upon his future. Little girls are an important factor in the counsels of the Infinite.

"Oh! she is just a young lady—rosy cheeks—blue eyes—lips like pinks," answered Mattie. "You ought to see her. She talks as if she had been there. Perhaps she has been part of the way when the others went—far enough to see through. There used to be more of the family, you know."

"It is her Bible that does it," explained Margie. "You see that marble book on the tombstone yonder? It looks as pure as snow, and means the love of the dead for God's Word. Cousin Margaret ought to have a white Bible. It would suit her complexion."

"I would give her one if I could," he said. "The idea is pleasing."

"The carriage is at the gate," interjected Mattie, and they spoke rapid good-byes and were gone.

"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings," he murmured to himself. "I need to become a child again. It is pitiful to be a Christian and stay among the fogs."

The shades were gathering. He loved to remain until after dark, until others had left the grounds, that he might enjoy his dead alone. After awhile he walked across to the spot from which for several days he had missed the white dress.

"The flowers need attention," he explained to the deepening twilight. "They look lonely and disappointed."

He pulled out the weeds and lightened the soil and supplied the moisture. Carefully he clipped the foliage forming the name "Martha." He had the womanly talent of neatness.

This was repeated for several evenings, always after all visitors were gone. The plants responded to his care readily —almost intelligently. The flowers seemed to recognize his touch. Some men are made that way.

On one of these evenings, after tending the flowers both on his mother's and on Martha's graves, lingering still, he went and seated himself on the chapel porch. He thought of Margie's prediction that the returning Savior was to stand there in the Great Day. He bared his brow to the stars, fanned by the Southern breeze that came laden with the odors of the corn-fields.

Nature was flinging holy incense over the abodes of her deceased admirers. They, too, had loved the landscapes of earth and had not forgotten them yet.

"Nowhere is twilight so winsome," he mused, "as upon this hill. Is it emblematic? Hidden in a haze of their own, there are hundreds of dim problems floating around in twilights denser than this."

After a little, he spoke again:

"Yonder are the preachers' graves. They, too, come and go—some worn and weary, some cut down in their youthful prime. They proclaimed immortality while they lived, they

claimed immortality while dying. They spoke from the frontiers. Plato, thou reasonest well."

The twilight had deepened into dark. Raising his eyes, he saw a pale form moving quickly among the tombs upon the farther side. The marble shafts were not whiter, and there was no sound. Had he not felt a presence before he looked up? He said:

"To the superstitious, the weird and the eerie grope in the gloaming. They all hint of existence beyond the grave. Now dreamers are trying to solve it all with their mystic occultism. Others are analyzing the spirits. They would have Banquo's ghost mumble scientifically."

He watched the pale figure with a thrill as it approached Martha's grave. The water with which he had sprinkled it was not yet dry.

Meanwhile the white figure was wondering gratefully—Who had cared for her charge during her absence? Who had kept her flowers white and luxuriant? Who had been working there within an hour?

Returning to-day, she would not sleep until she had visited the sacred spot.

Was the air of the evening electric, while now and then the dim noiseless lightning played upon the horizon?

Unconscious of any listener nearer than the skies, she began to warble softly in words and chords evidently her own. It was all low, suppressed, delicate, but clear, distinct, articulate; the whole still atmosphere about the monuments seeming to pulsate with the sweet vibrations. He had never heard such melody. And thus she sang:

"For those prepared there is no death;
Received, redeemed, forgiven,
One look aloft, one gentle breath,
And then the vales of heaven.

"For Christian hope there is no death;
All pain and grief suspending,
The peace assured, the lighted path,
The soaring soul ascending.

"For trust serene there is no death;
Rare balms for all its sadness,
The veil withdrawn, triumphant faith,
And dawn of fadeless gladness.

"For loving hearts there is no death;
With Jesus in communion,
We rise and leave the clouds beneath
And share the heavenly union.

"Ridge Park, we raise the victor's wreath,
The crown eternal o'er thee;
For hopeful graves there is no death,
But bursts of coming glory."

Gilbert Wayne went to his dreams that night with pageants of little children and white-robed angels mingling resplendently. At intervals the little girls' cousin came and passed among the others, and she and the one in white seemed to be well acquainted. Now, too, his mother was there, and a halo was over them all, and she seemed to bless them, and he was content.

CHAPTER III.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE SPADE.

Under the trees at noon old Charon was resting from his labors. The perspiration was as profuse as the vagaries of the un-Christian Science that tries to ignore the evil in the world, but stumbles at the grave. Charon knew better than that. He was a thoughtful functionary and magnified his office. He felt that he was cultivating one of the noblest investments in the State. No Saline County farmer could have been more proud of his broad acres, and Father Time himself never wielded scythe more skillfully. The ancient ferryman of the Styx, his namesake, could never have estimated more highly his responsibilities in transferring the pale shades to the other shore.

Charon was of a reflective turn of mind. He turned many a thought while turning the sod. If Wordsworth overthrew no proprieties in selecting a peddler for his sage, and getting whole pages of wisdom and poesy out of him, why may we not expect something out of a grave-digger? Shakespeare could not dig out his supremest drama without the Sexton.

Having for most of the time no other living audience, Charon had a way of talking to himself. So he sat through his hour's nooning and soliloquized:

"The doctors and the preachers and the Pope cannot fully get in their work without the help of your humble servant. I 've come all the way from ould Ireland to be of assistance to 'em. I complete their jobs. The best medicine sometimes and the best sermon is the grave.

"I warrant my graves—ivery one of 'em. They are no frauds. They fit all ages and sizes. They are neat and regular and perpendicular and cozy. They will not cave in and hurt the sleeper. Ivery one of the occupants will rest at ease and undisturbed. There is no insomnia in my graves. And no ghost haunts 'em. If anything goes wrong, it 's not my fault.

"There are various ways of diggin' graves. The damage is done before they apply to me. If they dig their own graves, I don't guarantee that sort.

"A man drinks and carouses, wrecks his home and his life, and winds up with snakes in his boots. He has dug his own grave. I won't be responsible for that.

"A woman gets as besotted with fashion and worldliness as the drunkard with drink; lives fast, neglects house and health, squeezes into thin shoes and corsets, thinks there is no hereafter, and digs her own grave. My spade can't rectify that.

"A young man slights father and mother, considers them ould fogies, runs loose, believes it smairt, and goes to the dogs. He has been sowing his wild oats; and in the cemetery wild oats turn to nettles. The pick has been in his own hand and he has been picking away at his own grave. I can't warrant that.

"The girl is pampered and spoiled, learns disobedience, and cares for nobody but herself. No true ladyhood is in her build. She may well fear the graveyard. Her selfishness and hatefulness are digging her own grave. It is damp and clammy. I can't answer for that.

"Here struts a man too profound for anything. He knows it all. The Bible won't do, and Church won't do, and preachin' won't do, and the Almighty won't do. He palavers about science and lairnin' and all that. He thinks he can run the univairse. He dies all the same—dies of the big-head. He had dug his own grave and had a patent on it. I don't like to dig that kind.

"Oh, yes, my Charon, you see that there are other artists in dirt besides you. And they make the pit rough and jagged and ugly and uncomfortable, and spoil the funeral.

"But there are graves that I brag on. The friends who come there are calm and thoughtful and seem to think it 's all right, though their eyes may be drippin'—and I make it all as round and soft and mellow as I can. There are no loud cries, nor wailin', and they come the next day and appear to be content with what their God and the sexton have done; and they

are in love with the place and plant the posies; and they return the next day, and the next, and the grave does not grow lonesome.

"After awhile they put up the neat monument, and there is a healthy pride in it, and every week the grounds become more attractive. Tombstones do not lie as they used to; their words are more modest, and the life is left to tell the story. 'There is my life,' said one of these who is sleeping here—a good man, who, in dying, was not afraid to appeal to the record. It was not a boast, but a willingness to rest the past with God. Braggart funeral sermons and braggart tombstones are going out of date.

"These tasty monuments seem like children in my house. I feel like a father to 'em. They group themselves like brothers and sisters.

"Ivery man ought to have his heart in his profession. The doctor should honor his job, and so should the preacher. The sexton, if he does his duty, loves to be appreciated. We are all that way. I think that even Death likes to be appreciated.

"You notice how ould friends try to get their lots close together? They want to keep up acquaintance, as it were, and continue neighbors. They like to get close enough to keep in speakin' distance, as it were. It does not seem so lonesome. I love to put 'em in the same neighborhood.

"Yonder lie two good women who lived next door to each other and used to talk across the palings. They loved like the blood of the same mother. They were like the sunshine to each other. They died some years apart, and many miles apart, but always undivided. And then they brought the other back, Ridge Park the magnet, and placed them closer together than they were in life. Only a few feet now separate their domiciles. They seem to be awaiting the same resurrection.

"Folks rave and rhyme about Golconda. Ridge Park is not behind in diamonds. You see those two small hillocks yonder? It means a double crib now empty, and arms of papa and mamma empty, and two sister-twins in sleep unbroken. Don't walk roughly there. Let the rosebuds grow.

"The ground-squirrels, striped and spry, think they are

my partners. It is their favorite spot of all. They tarry by the graves as if they were reasonin', and they seem to know. They are never rude and noisy; they maintain the proprieties.

"See that little mother-chipmuck with her three young hopefuls. She stands straight on end, her head above the grass, watchin' if there is danger—as all mothers do. Folks talk sometimes of murderin' them. Is death not doin' enough killin' of mothers and children? Let the harmless live. They only burrow a little way in the ground, as we all shall do after awhile.

"The little fellows are sentimental. You see that grave to the right? No stone yet marks the spot, but loving hearts know the place. And the beautiful squirrels are never far away, for she and all innocent things would have liked each other.

"Before Ridge Park was born she grew up as pretty as a picture. Fair damsels were growin' up like prairie flowers and lyin' down in the wet ground, with no proper place for their repose. No wonder that thoughtful men wanted a place fit for the pure and lovely to rest in. You can judge a community by its graveyards.

"There was none lovelier than she, and the bloom came on and lovers buzzed about her like bumble-bees. I need not call her name. The angels could tell it if they would.

"There was a story of love, a romance and wedding dreams. They are not all in novels. Breathing over these grounds like the odors of faded flowers, there are plenty of tales of the heart; but Ridge Park knows how to keep its secrets.

"Death loves a shinin' mark—so somebody says—it might well have been a sexton who said it. From the Missouri River to the Gulf the girl shone like a star and carried the charm everywhere. And a new star was wanted in heaven, and then earth has to give 'em up. The shapely body came back smilin' to the home of her birth. I almost always bury 'em in smiles.

"What a bride she would have made! Ould Ireland's Tom Moore never sang of a fairer. Those lovers never mar-

ried, I think. These heart-stories run on very prettily in life and sometimes clear beyond. I dug that grave very tenderly. See the little squirrels by her side thinkin' about it all.

"Ould Charon has a pet notion in his ould head. He is not after tellin' it yet. Our cheerful chapel will be writin' history some day. When the people rose beautifully to build it, I knew it would be motherin' nice children of its own in the times to come. In its taperin' spires and pictured windows and welcomin' doors there seem to be comfort and peace and prophecy. It is a place where memories will grow like lilies.

"And Charon has a dream in his ould noggin. That chapel has looked out upon much that is pleasin'—true attachments, faithful recollections, devotion to the end, pledges never broken. And these are matrimonial ingredients.

"Why should there not be a quiet, sacred weddin' in that temple—with the blessings of the dead restin' upon bride and bridegroom? Lyin' all around are many wedded hearts who knew what true marriage means. And then the Greatest of Bridegrooms will Himself be comin' this way after awhile. In the meantime Charon is not blind to some peculiarities goin' on of late in this yard."

Did the genial sexton see Gilbert Wayne approaching as he spoke, and did this bring out the knowing look upon Charon's rugged face?

The young man inquired about some of the family lots and monuments, and the sexton was always glad to answer questions. To see the owners taking an interest in their grounds and beautifying them was his delight. By that sign he estimated character.

The old man kept the wise smile, sure that his questioner had not reached his point. Finally he knew that it was reached when the young gentleman asked about the lot where the foliage plants were cherishing the word "Martha."

Then Charon told of the lovely blonde who had walked the streets like a vision of grace, captivating all beholders. Then came the fading, the sundering, the vernal burial.

"There were many tears," he said. "They fell as soft as the night-dews. By her request she was buried at sunset.

May was at its prettiest and holiest. It was a charming home that had been rent, a happy circle and well-to-do. I think she was one of twins. A sore parting, but they were not of a kind to make a fuss at what God does. When folks go in peace as she went, the grave is no scare-crow."

Gilbert was deeply interested, but he was finding out more about the dead than the living. There was some skirmishing of wits while Charon continued to talk in generalities. He mentioned no names except Martha's.

When Gilbert had left, his curiosity stimulated but not satisfied, Charon with a wink, thus entertained himself:

"Let 'em work it out; Ridge Park betrays no confidences. This round hill could tell many strangs things if it would. There is many an unsuspected poem beneath these grounds. There are libraries of stories. But the dead teach us how to be silent and keep our own counsels. There are no tattlers beneath the sod. Why did he not try to quiz Martha?

"Mystery is a stimulus to lovers—so they say. It gives the spice. It sets the imagination a-goin'. It transforms the mighty ordinary into seraphs.

"She too wanted Charon to tell who took care of her flowers while she was gone. Why did she not think it was the sexton?—bless her pretty heart! Very shrewd and cute was she in her round-about way of gettin' at it—as winnin' all the time as a pie dressed in white laces. But it wouldn't do. She needed some mystery, too.

"How long will the two look and long and act like children? I 'll brush up the chapel for a weddin'. But let 'em work it out—let 'em work it out!"

CHAPTER IV.

The Road Forks.

Gilbert Wayne was no idle dreamer. He was a man of affairs and his affairs were never neglected. The clients who frequented his office never found him forgetful of their interests or absent-minded. They would not have suspected that in an hour or two he would get apart from all engagements and be quietly meditating in the graveyard.

In the well-balanced, business and elevated sentiment need not conflict. There is an inner as well as an outer life.

And yet there had been a change. Memories shape the future. Awhile ago Gilbert was saying that with his mother's departure former ambitions had departed. In this he was probably mistaken—those ambitions only dormant for a time and awaiting an awakening. The mother who had been a large part of his life, was to be a large part yet. But it is hard, it takes time to adjust oneself to these revolutions in life.

The plans of the Great Manager are not interrupted when our loved ones go; other influences will combine under the same Divine control to shape the destiny of the survivor. There grows up an alliance between the dead and the living. The two worlds overlap. The power of buried hearts and the power of the contemporaneous combine to shape the immortal. The graveyard is under commission as certainly as the Church.

Gilbert was again at Ridge Park resting from his labors. The thrush was singing in the poplar. A humming bird, in rainbow tints, was flitting among the flowers and sipping the sweets.

Birds loved the grounds but, adding more cheerfulness than they, our two little girls, busy for awile about the baby's grave, had come to Gilbert's side. He had been wishing for them. They were making their way into the young man's

life, as little girls will. The odors of the pinks and jasmines came with them.

"You were ahead of us," said Mattie, "but we hurried out just as soon as school was over."

"One of our class," said Margie, "got seminary and cemetery so mixed up that she couldn't spell either one of them."

"Well," answered Gilbert, "the cemetery is indeed a school, richly endowed, wisely officered. It is God's University. All around us here we count the teachers by scores."

The children looked thoughtful. He loved to see them that way. After a moment, Mattie answered:

"Yes, sometimes I can almost hear them telling us to be good and talking of heaven."

Margie seemed to be reflecting very profoundly. Gilbert waited for her thought to shape itself. Then she said sagely:

"They never scold us; they never fuss over bad lessons."

These things were pleasant to the young man. When our feelings are abnormal and rebellious, children are often the best of balms. Gilbert asked:

"Can you tell me who first went to the grave and thereby became our instructor?"

"Oh, you mean Abel, I suppose," answered Mattie very promptly; "for he is teaching us yet. He became a part of the Bible."

"Yes," he replied, "the first man who went to the grave went to heaven. An earthly paradise had been lost, but a celestial paradise was gained. But alas for poor Eve, the first mother to stand by the bier of her boy!"

"They have been together a long time now," responded Margie, with her usual directness.

Children's remarks cover broad territories sometimes. Gilbert wondered if the child saw the full import of her words and their beauty. And was she thinking of his own separation and discontent? After a pause, he said with a discord:

"These grounds are beautiful, but how much more beautiful if mothers and children were never torn apart!"

Again the little girls were troubled. They felt that jar in look and tone which they had noticed before. The child's dis-

cernment of jars is very acute. Now came from Mattie an answer which no one could have anticipated:

"Jesus was Eve's son, you know. God told her about Him."

Gilbert was surprised, wondering again if she understood the strong logic of her words. He felt rebuked, and, while he reflected, Margie's comment further surprised him:

"Jesus conquered death; our Sunday-school teacher told us about it. What was the great word, Mattie? Abolished death—that 's it, right out of the Bible. Pity but you could hear Cousin Margaret!"

"I surely wish I could," he answered smiling, "though I am well satisfied with my present instructors, Prof. Mattie and Prof. Margie."

They did not know how their former talk and their child-like pictures of their cousin had played upon his imagination. This is a little dangerous for lonely young men.

They were amused at his words, and he added:

"It would be difficult to find better teachers than Cousin Mattie and Cousin Margie!"

Juvenile logic was at work again. Mattie looked at her sister and said:

"How can he be our cousin? Wouldn't it be nice?"

"Oh," answers the ever-ready Margie, "I know! If he marries Cousin Margaret, he 'll be our cousin, too!"

"That would be a splendid inducement," he answered. "But Cousin Margaret might not like to marry!"

"Oh, yes she would!" Margie replied as positive as ever. "All the girls would."

This was delicious, and he drew the child to his side. He thought again of the humming-birds. And how his buried mother would have loved these innocent girls! There was a lighting up among the shadows on his brow. Once more the older sister surprised him:

"You said your mother was a good woman, and I am sure she would have liked Cousin Margaret."

On her death-bed Mrs. Wayne had spoken of his marriage in the coming days; had hoped that it might be so, for it would

comfort him. She had said that thus her boy would be happier and better; that man could never attain to his noblest and best without the love of some pure and gracious woman.

"Only be sure, my son," she added tenderly, "that she is an earnest child of God. Then with two hearts religiously wed, it will be true marriage and blest."

Now to Gilbert's thoughts the voice of the sainted mother and the words of his little girls were strangely in unison. This often occurs with the voices of the dead and of the living —both really living.

"Cousin Margaret loves all the old folks," continued the younger sister. "They think there is nothing like her. She would have loved your mother."

"Wouldn't it be nice," queried Mattie, "to have one like her to help you in taking care of the grave—two of you together?"

These little match-makers could not have wielded their forces more adroitly if they had been professionals. To him his mother's love and loveliness had sufficed—a foil to all rivals. Now and then there are such sons as well as such daughters. These artless diplomats, without dreaming of it, were touching the under-currents of his being.

"Tell me again how she looks," he said, as if to humor their whims, but really with increasing interest.

"Oh, she is as pretty as that rose by the head of your mother," answered Mattie enthusiastically. "Her cheeks are like the pink one, but her lips redder. Her eyes are as blue as—as—oh, I don't know—but soft as down, if down could smile!"

"You don't know how to tell it," interposed Margie. "She is a lily. No, a peach, for you want to eat her—like ice cream, you know, real cream. Besides, she is good—*good!*"

"You told me the other day," he answered, "that she was like a white Bible. That struck my fancy most. This box contains a Bible, bound in snow almost—will you take it to her? Tell her it 's from a stranger who has heard of her own whiteness."

"Oh, we couldn't tell who it 's from if we tried," they both said at once. "We don't know who you are."

When the prattlers were gone, he went on thinking. Far more than they or he divined, they had stirred his interest. Hearts mellowed by bereavement are susceptible to all tenderer emotions.

Was Cousin Margaret indeed such as his mother would have fancied? Was she so truly lovable? Are not children's estimates of the good generally correct? He said after awhile:

"It is silly, very silly, but somehow the chance words of these little girls seem to be reaching new fountains. Perhaps it is because of the felt emptiness of the heart crying to be filled. I am implicitly accepting these girl-Cupids' estimates of their cousin. And they have made the grave endorse it."

Was there something almost absurd in all this? Not to the genuine lovers of little girls, nor of big girls either. The romantic has its world. It makes queens and heroines of the other sex. It creates and enthrones ideals. Gilbert would dream on and let matters take their course, but first or last he was resolved to know Cousin Margaret.

And now a diversion occurred. Glancing across the cemetery, Gilbert saw the white dress and white sunbonnet among the flowers. The thrush was singing a vesper hymn in the poplar.

Never had maidenly form appeared so graceful and poetic as now. He had to-day been enjoying copies of the frescoes on the walls of Pompeii, the floating figures of sylphs and goddesses, but among them all there was none more perfect than this. The drapery waving about her looked as pure in the evening light as the snowy statuette of the angel on yonder tombstone.

Gilbert suddenly woke up to an analysis of his feelings. Until now he had not suspected his deepening interest in two directions—the cousin of the little girls and the faithful sister by Martha's grave. Was the awakening the more amusing or perplexing?

Absorbed in his bereavement and in his controversy with Providence, he had been humoring his curiosity about the two interesting damsels. Such curiosity about beautiful women is always perilous to hearts not preoccupied.

Until now his heart had gone out to but one woman. He had idolized his mother and she had been enough. It was startling now to find himself the sport of a double and divided fascination. Companionship in devotion to the dead had won his admiration for the one; and the two little charmers by his mother's tomb had enlisted a singular regard for the other. Both of these impressions had stealthily become stronger than he knew. And all this while unacquainted with either one of them.

The young man's impulse was to go immediately to town and find out all about them both; but inquiry by a comparative stranger would betray his interest and involve the ladies. As a new man in the community, he had no right to do this, nor to ask an introduction. Where his mother's sex were concerned, his scruples of propriety were as delicate as theirs. When the world is full of such delicacy, the millennium will be near.

And then Gilbert was feeling some natural impatience with himself and these absurdities. If such was his first venture in affairs of the heart, he would no more of it.

However, he did approach old Charon again and talked about Martha and Mattie and Margie, but nothing satisfactory was elicited. The sexton was on the defensive and the evasive, and afterwards thus chuckled to himself:

"Very smairt, my boy, very smairt. But graveyards are not babblers. Sure, my hearty, you 're in love, and it ought not to come too aisy. It 's like diggin' a grave in winter-time; you must break through the crust. The cemetery holds many a brave lover who wooed and won. They all had their courtin' times. The weddin' bells rung after awhile. Yonder and yonder they rest, side by side. So I 'll kape the chapel in order. But let 'em work it out—let 'em work it out."

CHAPTER V.

The Voice from the Chapel.

It had been a laborious day in the office, and its occupant was glad when the relief of evening came. The one gone who had enjoyed them most, in the successes of his vocation there was an emptiness which made even the brightest of his triumphs pall.

We live in the approbation and admiration of others. When the age which brightened and the heart which thrilled at our achievements have faded and failed, the relish of the arena vanishes.

But why should this be? If solicitous to please and be worthy of the loved while living, why not anxious to please and be worthy after they have ascended?

It is a pity, and a needless loss, when we permit our dead to drop out of our lives. Whatever his disappointment and loneliness, as long as Gilbert continued to hasten to that grave, the power of that good woman's life would not leave him stranded.

Tired from business burdens, the words on the monument and the cheer of the flowers are wholesome recreation. Then, still in sight of the sacred spot, he strolls to the chapel porch.

Out in these grounds there was solitude, and yet it was a peopled solitude. There was a fellowship not felt in town. The dead meet us half-way. Immortality, then, needs no argument.

"There are memories of my mother," he said, "of her words, of her looks, of her ways, which awake when they please and reappear in ever-fresh beauty. Acts and utterances which seemed forgotten, revive and flash anew upon my soul. I see and hear her again. It is like a resurrection of the dead."

Too much absorbed to notice at first, he became aware of voices in the chapel. Visitors do not go to the graveyard for companionship with the living.

Now Gilbert's ear is caught by tones with a rare melody in them, such as he had never heard before. Even without the words, the music of the voice was like enchantment. The distant notes of a lone whippoorwill are all that remain in the deepening stillness to rival the articulate melody.

"You believe, then," queried the other unseen speaker, "in the recognition of friends in heaven?"

"Ah, why not?" answered the marvelous voice. "Why dim and blur the beautiful vision? Why attempt to obscure and mystify the land of light? What is there in the perfections of heaven to so distort the redeemed that they should not be recognizable? I would as soon think of failing to know our Savior."

The intonations were as musical as the richest keys of a harp. Gilbert breathed carefully lest he break the spell. The whippoorwill was forgotten.

"The camera catches the features," she continued, "and perpetuates the sparkle of love. For years we look upon the lineaments and the traits of one who has gone to the grave. If the solar rays and the art of man can preserve the beauty of the ascended, I cannot believe that the light of the eternal world can deface and disfigure the beautiful and holy who have gone from us. Their voices, too, were a part of their souls. These voices come back to us yet in some sweet pensive hour. And shall the ingenuity of man, shall the phonograph, preserve for years the voices of the departed, and shall the saved soul forget its own interpreter? True love-tones are immortal."

The rich modulations of the speaker flowed on like rippling waters. It never occurred to Gilbert that he was eavesdropping. The silent tombstones seemed to be listening, as still as he.

"But may we not ourselves," questioned the other, "be so changed as to lose sight of earthly attachments? May we not be so absorbed in the presence and the love of Jesus as to become oblivious to all else?"

"It is not so that the presence and love of Jesus affect us," answered those sweet cadences. "When on earth among His

friends, it did not cause parents to forget their children. At Cana the bridegroom did not ignore the bride because Jesus was there; nor did His coming to Bethany cause the sisters to lose interest in their dead brother. The joys of marriage and the shadows of the tomb both brightened at His coming. In our most religious hours, we love our loved ones only the more, our dead included. Neither the home nor the graveyard need to come between us and our Savior. It continued so after His resurrection, and there is no reason why it should not be so after our own resurrection."

There was silence for awhile, only intensified by the pensive notes of the whippoorwill upon the other hill. Gilbert longed for more, the voice within the chapel still vibrating upon a heart full of thoughts of his mother. After an interval the other speaker replied:

"This is very suggestive. And perhaps the paths of duty and of Christian experience here and up yonder are not so widely different after all."

"Oh, no!" answered those charming accents and with new fervor; "describing the highest attainments of grace on earth, Jesus said, 'Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.' The two commandments do not conflict; no, He says they are alike. Supreme love to God, loving Him with all our powers, carries with it the love of friends. Now if the very highest attainments in the love of God here below includes exalted regard for our neighbor, I cannot see how it can fail to be so when all love is perfected. And to love them in heaven, we must know them."

Again there was a pause as if both were thinking—perhaps communing with their dead. In Gilbert's heart there was a dawn of joy such as he had not felt since his bereavement. Once more the rare voice resumed:

"Assuredly our faculties will be clarified, not clouded; developed, not dwarfed. In the land of light we shall know more, not less. There must be an abnormal laming and maiming of the soul before it could lose its powers of recognition.

Heaven does not lame and maim. So Paul declares: 'Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as I am known.' I cannot conceive of a mother so transformed, or deformed, by grace as not to know her child."

The young man's bosom thrilled. He was himself the child. The tones were as soft as his mother's lullaby of years ago.

"You seem to have approached very near to the borders," said the other unknown. "And surely it must be so."

"Oh, it is so," responded the sweet voice, confidently. "The glorified are not insane or feeble-minded. They think, they remember, they reason, they enjoy the past, they love, they await our coming—and all this gloriously. Already there have been such recognitions—the first fruits. The Shunamite mother recognized her resurrected boy. Martha and Mary had no difficulty in recognizing Lazarus, though from the decay of the tomb. On the holy mount the ancient prophets were distinguishable, though Elijah had been in heaven nine hundred years and Moses fourteen centuries. Though appearing 'in glory,' the effulgence did not obliterate their identity nor obscure their personality. The individuality shone out as brilliantly as the bright cloud. There are hours when some of us seem to see our loved ones shining on high, even as those old prophets shone."

These thoughts may not have been new, but they came to Gilbert with a force never felt before. They illuminated the graveyard. She spoke as one who knew. That marvelous sweetness in her tones might have been caught from the upper climes. He was glad when she spoke again:

"The graveyard and the Bible are like old comrades. In the death-records of the ancient patriarchs there is rare poetry and pathos, 'Gathered unto their people,' 'gathered unto their fathers.' It is pleasing to think of death that way. By the corpse of his child, David finds comfort in the cheerful thought, 'I shall go to him.' There would be little consolation in it if parent and child were never to know each other again. Oh, no—it cannot be! When we see Jesus as He is, we expect

to be like Him; the dead and risen Jesus did not forget His loved ones."

She spoke in joyous strain, growing in intensity. Gilbert dreaded that it might cease. Evidently she had been bereaved and found the fountains of healing. For him the climax was yet to come. The other speaker said:

"If all this is true, Ridge Park, on some of these coming days, will be a scene of splendors—reunions, greetings, blissful hand-shakings."

"The morning cometh," was the answer, and with the morning in it. "By some of those sleeping here, there were assured recognitions before they passed away. As the young man's eyes were opened at Dotham, as the dying Stephen looked clear through and saw, so did some of these departing saints see and recognize the waiting ones before they went. Along the beautiful pathway of our Christianity, this has occurred thousands of times. The spiritual vision has cleared and faces were seen and welcomes heard of those who had come to escort them home. Reason unclouded, eyes lifted, they have told of the smiling visitants appearing like Moses and Elias arrayed in glory. Mothers have seen their babes, children their parents, husbands their wives and wives their husbands, and brother and sister have spoken across the borders. This adorned the victory over death. Recognition—oh, yes; we have had the testimony of eye-witnesses."

One listener was stirred by her musical words and intonations as she could not have dreamed. So it was that his own mother had gone away.

"They have come for me," she had said; "my own mother, no longer old; Allie, my beautiful sister; and my darling little first-born; all here! I am glad—I am ready!"

And then she closed her eyes and went with them. Strange that he had never thought of these not unusual experiences of the dying as added proofs to the Bible facts.

And who was this woman, unseen, who was unconsciously stirring the deeper tides of his soul? That wonderful voice was to go on vibrating upon ear and heart forever. While he yet wondered, her thoughts fell naturally and unaffectedly

into rhyme and metre. He felt sure that the words were her own, but any words would be poetry pulsating upon that voice:

"We shall know as we are known
On some bright day;
When clouds and mists of earth have flown
In light away.

"We shall know as we are known—
The death-shades passed,
All sweetly gathered to our own,
At home at last.

"We shall know as we are known
On that fair shore—
Each loving face, each gentle tone,
To part no more.

"We shall know as we are known,
'Mid echoing psalms,
The fadeless smile, the golden crown,
The waving palms.

"Thy tears, Ridge Park, the sigh, the moan,
Shall pass away,
And we shall know as we are known
On that bright day!"

CHAPSUR VI.

THE DREAMER.

The voice from the chapel was still pulsating through the veins of Gilbert Wayne. It had brought heaven and earth nearer together for him than ever before. To no devotee in ancient temple did the oracles ever speak more impressively from hidden shrine.

The temptation to remain and discover the owner of the marvelous tones and of the cloudless faith had been strong. The presentiment grew that both voice and faith were to be a part of his life and that he must know her.

But he felt self-condemned in taking advantage of the unsuspecting woman and listening to words not meant for his ear. Should he still further spy upon her?

A manly delicacy asserted itself, and, without waiting for her to leave the chapel, he turned thoughtfully and walked slowly homeward.

But the utterances of the unknown vestal followed him persistently and wholesomely. The obscurations had begun to pass from between him and the celestial world. The separation between him and his dead was not so abysmal. The time of recognition was coming and the greetings.

And who was his preacher? How had she attained to such assured and consolatory views of the eternal mysteries? To talk of these things with such clearness, how old was she? And was that unrivaled voice an index to face and character? Was she married or single?

Notwithstanding a busy day at the office, these thoughts continued to obtrude upon the laborious hours. Then at night there came to him three distinct and remarkable dreams.

He was passing through a thickly-wooded wilderness—hills and valleys, rocks and dells, and flowing rivulets. All was beautiful, but the loneliness was profound. There seemed to be inhabitants—perceived but unperceived—a mystery fill-

ing the groves. No path was discoverable—no trace of footsteps. Night was coming.

Then were there not dim forms and shapes flitting among the trees—indistinct, weird—but taking no notice of him? He was only the more entirely alone. Was it real or was it a vague allegory? Still he must walk onward, going he knew not whither!

Now he certainly sees a more familiar figure—was it not the white-draperied maiden of the graveyard? She was as graceful as a fawn, her movements as light and fanciful as a white mist in the sky. She seemed to beckon and yet to elude. How gladly he would have approached?

She evidently knew the way. He felt that he needed to be led. She appeared and disappeared. He began to yearn to overtake her, but made no progress. There came a strain upon his heart. He felt there was no hope of deliverance from these spells without her. He attempted to call, and he awoke.

Again he slept and a change came over the spirit of his dream. He was upon a meandering stream, winding through unexplored distances. The shores were full of flowers and fragrance, and gay-plumaged birds were singing in the trees.

Suddenly the landscapes grew rugged and barren. The stream began to rush onward into broken rapids, and there was danger. He failed to control the helm. The boat was leaking.

All at once, from somewhere upon the shore, a voice was heard—as of an angel. Never were such cadences of sweetness and power known in the land. They seemed to speak of cheer and hope and deliverance. The boat, as of its own volition, veered that way.

Still the currents grew more violent and perilous. He had no power to shape his course. But the mystic voice still wooed and grew richer. His boat was drawn as by a magnet. The waters raged, the boat struggled. He saw no helper—he only heard. There was a shock, and he awoke.

Once more he slept and a change came over the spirit of his dream. He was in a large dark cavern, and unaccountably there were graves in it, all around and beneath his feet. When

his eyes strained, he could see tombstones like spectres amid the gloom. He stumbled over them, it was wearying, and he must get out of the cave. The air was oppressive, and proximity of the dead forbidding. The black arches of the cavern shut him in and seemed to hold him. And now was not that his mother's grave? Yes, surely; but it brought no light. Upon his eyes there were as if it had been scales. He came near falling even over his mothr's grave.

Then two little girls were by his side, their faces familiar, offering him their clearer vision and proposing to guide him. Their hands were pointing. He looked in that direction and saw an opening, and in the opening a shining light and a radiant figure which smiled and invited. While he gazed entranced, with warming bosom, the children said, "Go; it is Cousin Margaret."

The cave trembled, the new light seemed about to go out, he awoke and, behold, it was a dream.

These dreams were of a kind that survive and refuse to be forgotten. Day and night were combining to puzzle him. What further complications were to arise?

Sitting in his office, he turned from business problems and reflected:

"It is approaching the ridiculous. Gilbert Wayne is losing his balance. He, the supremely practical, who ignores the romantic, who cares nothing for poetry, who has been indifferent to all womankind outside of his own family, who has never had a love affair in his life, who has been proud of his ironclad heart—now, alas, to be submerged under three besetments simultaneously! Three feminine troublers as a starter. And each one of these equally an enigma. A trio of fascinations independent and parallel. Three armies of invasion.

"No. 1, a splendor of white dress and white sunbonnet, notably pure and sylph-like, enveloping we know not whom; No. 2, the kinswoman of two prattling girls who have been hypnotized into admiration of her and become extravagant in their praises; No. 3, a disembodied piece of elocution out of the unknown, very enrapturing, the song of a seraph, as it were. Here is the triple plot with a graveyard for the background.

"And there towers Gilbert Wayne, the prosaic bachelor, hopelessly infatuated with three women, his imagination suddenly broken loose and transforming each one of them into a goddess! Which is the most beautiful he doesn't know, for he has never had a glimpse of their faces. Which is the most lovable he can't tell to save his life. He has staked highly upon blood; of the family connection of these he has no more idea than the man in the moon.

"And here is the silly fellow dreaming of the three the whole night through, amid all kinds of botherations. There never was a ranker absurdity. Is the experimenter sane or insane? What would my mother say? Gilbert Wayne, stick to *her*, stick to *her*, and let this tangle go."

A few minutes later he saw Mattie and Margie on their way to the cemetery and he soon followed. These children were no dream and he loved to be near them. What havoc they would make with men's hearts some day!

Gilbert had watered his flowers, feeling an especial interest in his white rose. It looked like a bride among the blossoms. It was pleasant, too, to watch his pair of chums about the grave of their baby brother. There was no gloom in their thoughts of death—they were the true philosophers. There was more poetry in his nature than he admitted.

His eye now turned to a gentleman who sat meditating by another tomb same distance away. He was often there and had evidently preferred to be entirely alone Gilbert said:

"The sundering in true marriage must be agony. Those two lived together through a good long stretch of happy years. It seemed to be a model home. At its best and fondest, wedded life must be sublime. Two hearts beating as one, joys and sorrows shared and halved, every interest the same, twain one flesh—the thought came from God; the verity must be divine. It is above and beyond me.

"Since my mother died, sometimes the bright possibility glimmers, but all becomes confusion again and the visions go out. I have never had an angel to pilot me there. Three—but that is nonsense!

"I pity yonder dissevered destiny. One left—one beneath

the sod. The beautiful unity forever broken. Marriage a wreck!"

As if a magnetic wave had passed between, the gentleman at that moment arose and approached. It was the first time he had been seen to seek any living companionship on the ground. The little girls had preceded him and were now sitting with their friend. Perhaps they had been the chief attraction to the lonely watcher. We lean to little girls when others repel. After admiring remarks about the other flowers, the gentleman said:

"That white rose is their queen. It suits its environment. It speaks of the cleansed, the washed, the stainless. Will you let me talk of such a soul? She was of that make, and all who met her felt the whiteness. Communities loved, praised, almost reverenced. Into my hands she gave herself—her heart, her aspirations after usefulness, her all. At home she was all that adorns wifehood and motherhood."

The little girls were listening closely. And the third listener was no less intent. The gentleman continued:

"I thought I appreciated her. And surely I did know her worth, honoring her many superb traits. I was proud of her influence for good and her place in the hearts of the people. But I suppose that no man adequately estimates the wife of his bosom until she is gone. The grave has to be the exponent. Marriage seems holier then—the tie, when broken, a thousand times mightier. The dead woman fills and glorifies the past."

Mattie and Margie moved their places and sat by him, one on each side. What interested them so? Did they feel mysteriously a good man's appreciation of their sex? Children are mind-readers and heart-readers sometimes. Gilbert, too, was deeply touched. The visitor continued:

"Were it all to be lived over, how much more I would do for her happiness. I see it now—through all these lonely days. Surely I loved her—surely I was zealous to guard and protect and please. But the little things—the little things which make up so much of a woman's life. The delicate attentions which were given to the bride! How many unspoken

words which might have been so easily spoken! How many omitted commendations for which perhaps she longed! How much more affectionate the manner and voice might have been when she was tired and burdened! What priceless opportunities for tendernesses—once gone, gone forever!"

Then Mattie spoke. "Perhaps she hears you now," she said.

A moisture came to the gentleman's eyes as he answered:

"God bless you, my child—for perhaps she does- I have been trying to tell her all this by the silent grave. Even on her death-bed I did not speak as I might have done. Through long seasons of suffering, she knew and we knew that the end was coming. Those hours of fading might have been alleviated by timely expressions of sympathy and love. I might have told her of all she had been to me. Why will foolish man hold back these things? It would be happiness to have poured out these confidences then, and not have to wait until we meet in heaven. Why will not husbands think of these things?"

Impulsive Margie pulled down his face and kissed him. "I kiss you for your wife," she said.

He paused—probably unable to speak. Then he talked again of the white rose.

"It is the bride of the rose gardens," he said. "It teaches of purity and peace and the fragrance of love in the human gardens. To you it speaks of your mother; to me it speaks of mother and wife. All will be white up yonder."

He kissed the children, and, as he left, he said:

"Gilbert, if ever a woman's happiness is committed to your keeping, remember these things ere too late. Honor the trust. Place her far above rubies. Don't stint the evidences of perennial regard. Thinking daily of these things is true marriage."

Then up spoke Margie with characteristic fervor:

"I believe he was thinking of you and Cousin Margaret. When you marry her, you just can't help being good to her!"

And Gilbert thought so, too. They always think so.

CHAPTER VII.

He Is Risen.

The Church of God is deeply interested in the graves—especially in One Grave. They have illustrated her history with triumphs. Her confessors and champions and martyrs are resting expectantly there. Thitherward all her mighty hosts will be perpetually tending as to a common waiting-ground. There on the great Coronation Morn will her vast resurrected congregations be waving palms and shouting pæans.

Meanwhile the houses of God, dotting the earth like stars, will be breathing perennial benedictions upon earth's burial-places.

The little artistic chapel, the crowning adornment of Ridge Park, stood there as a silent symbol of the sisterhood of Churches. The cemetery calls a halt to all sectarian prejudice. The dead hold no debates. The chapel, loved of all, welcoming all creeds and politics, was like the Gospel itself, the dwelling-place of peace. It was open to every lonely heart.

Gilbert Wayne had entered the doors, thinking of many things. He was far from reconciled to his loss. None can tell which needs the mother more, the daughter or the son. The soul of the confiding boy is shorn of props and of blossoms when mother goes. The divinest voice is hushed.

But another voice perhaps had drawn him to the chapel to-day. It was here he had heard the confident predictions of heavenly recognitions—the intonations which lingered like the song when the singer is gone. How did he know but he was sitting just where she had sat?

The little girls had seen Gilbert enter and, after their task was done, they followed him. He thought of the children in the Temple at Jerusalem.

Many influences were combining to melt the spirit of re-

bellion, his quarrel with the All-Wise, out of the heart of the young man. The sweet memories of a sweet mother gradually growing more soothing; the cheerfulness of other visitors to the cemetery; the bloom of the flowers; the song and evident Christian submission of the wearer of the white sunbonnet; the words of the unknown woman in the chapel; the beautiful child-like faith and prattle of Mattie and Margie; the person and character of Cousin Margaret as pictured and sublimated by the little girls; none of these things were accidents in the economy of grace, and they were impressing him.

"We saw to-day," said Mattie, "what you wrote in that white Bible: 'To the unknown Cousin Margaret, believed to be a saint by two little angels; sent because of its whiteness by an unknown visionary.' Well, she *is* a saint!"

"Yes, *she is a saint!*" repeated Margie, doubling the emphasis. "I wish you could hear her read that Bible. Talk of angels!"

"Of course she doesn't know who sent it," said the thoughtful Mattie; "she would not have accepted it if she did."

"She even blushed as it was," said Margie.

The heart of a young man is capable of unaccountable feats. He who but a few moments ago was weaving his fancies about the chapel vestal was now borne as upon the odor of roses toward the ideal saint of the enthusiastic girls. And this was the practical man of affairs of the town office! Through the eyes and hearts of these innocents he was loving their ideal, too.

"'Resurrection' is a big word," said Mattie, "but it is beautiful and glorious when she talks about it."

"Ever since we heard her," said Margie, "we have been waiting to see our baby brother spread his arms as he used to."

This was just what Gilbert needed. To-day he had been stumbling a little over the doctrine of the resurrection. The revitalizing of all this scattered and unconscious dust was almost unthinkable. How enviable the unquestioning faith of these children as brightened by the tuition of such a teacher!

There came an interruption not wholly acceptable at first. He preferred the present preachers. Rev. Mr. Blaston entered

and approached them cordially. Here the minister had buried his wife and loved the cemetery. Such providences link the pulpit very closely to the pews and to all humanity.

"In this yard," said Mr. Blaston, "the congregation are the preachers. Every grave is a sermon. It is like the silence of women in the churches—the most impressive of eloquence. My deceased fellow-worker has just been speaking to my heart of the resurrection of Jesus, carrying with it all other resurrections."

The little girls looked at the minister and then again at Gilbert. The thrush in the poplar was singing an Easter anthem.

"She lived the Gospel," said the pastor. "Her life was like a reiteration of good news. Her face and character were as open and clear as the Word of Life. She was transparently good, unselfish, unconsciously holy, and universally loved. Being dead, she yet speaketh. And the morning cometh."

"Jesus was buried and rose again," said Mattie, confidently.

"He led—something—captive; yes, captivity," said Margie, pleased that she had got the word.

"God bless you, my children!" responded Mr. Blaston with delight. "They are backing up the Apostle Paul. So shall it be with the new generations. Sitting yonder in communion with the departed, I have been reviewing in a common-sense way the evidences of Christ's victory over death. The Bible converges about a grave—its authority staked boldly upon the resurrection of a dead man. 'If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain.' There are four Epistles whose authenticity no critic now assails, no enemy of the Scriptures dares to question: Romans, Galatians, the two Corinthians. All these proclaim with emphasis that vacated grave."

Gilbert was listening with increasing interest. Mr. Blaston was a scholar, a theologian, and a common-sense man. Perhaps he was now more intense because of his visit to his wife's tomb. He continued:

"In the fifteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, that 'Marsellaise' of the graveyards, the Apostle does not argue the ques-

tion of the Savior's rising; he argues from it as a thoroughly attested fact. The witnesses still lived—he designates them. Masters of the principles of evidence declare that no historical fact has ever been so fully established. 'Many infallible proofs,' asserts the author of the Book of Acts."

"The Bible *says* He rose," answered Mattie and Margie together. Gilbert wished that his faith was like theirs.

"Yes, 'according to the Scriptures,'" answered the preacher. "So said Paul. Thus, 700 years before, Isaiah had prophesied (53:10); so prophesied Hosea 750 years before (6:2); so prophesied the Psalmist 1000 years before (16:10). This made it an event to be expected and to be prevented if His enemies could have done it. He, too, predicted it, and they kney it. (Matt. 17:62, 63.)"

"God fixed it all," spoke the children again together. Gilbert watched their minds and hearts with close attention.

"And then," continued the argument, "it was in historic times and an intelligent, critical age. It was an era when fables were sifted. The Roman emperors are as well known to us as our presidents. Palestine had been known among the nations for a thousand years. The New Testament events made a noise abroad. Tacitus, a secular historian of recognized trustworthiness, testifies to the crucifixion by the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate. These things were not done in a corner. They were in the open."

"This is an important point," commented Gilbert, thoughtfully. The little girls moved to his side.

"And further," Mr. Blaston continued, "we have the concurrent testimony of six historians of far purer characters than Tacitus—Paul and Peter and the four authors of the Gospels. Why credit the heathen writers of that day and discredit these six?"

"It is wicked," said Mattie. "It is goosey," said Margie.

The minds of these children had not been tainted by the sophistries of adult years. Gilbert was trying to be like them.

"Again," said the preacher, "why were not these witnesses impeached there and then? The fearless challenge was thrown before all contemporaries, before all skeptics and opposers, to confront the witnesses and destroy their credit.

This is of tremendous import. Suppose it asserted that one of yonder corpses had arisen and been seen for forty days by many still living. How easily proved or disproved by contemporaries! The enemies of Christianity were just as intelligent, as shrewd, as given to investigation, then as now. When they had bribed the guards of the sepulchre, these enemies seem to have exhausted themselves. And why were those guards not prosecuted for unfaithfulness to their trust? But above all, why not sift to the bottom the bold testimony of Christ's friends?"

"That was certainly the time and place to do it," reflected Gilbert candidly, "and not nineteen hundred years afterward."

"Besides," said Mr. Blaston, " of the death, of the burial, of the resurrection, the minutest details were given. It is dangerous for impostors to deal in particulars. They know they are the more easily detected. The fabulous is safe only in the fields of the vague and indefinite. But these men unhesitatingly took the risk. They gave names, places, dates—everything. They evidently were sure of their facts."

"Of course they were; they had seen!" interposed the unsophisticated little logicians.

"Then," resumed the minister, confident of his ground, "there was that empty and investigated tomb. It was the property of a prominent man. Everybody knew of the ancient prophecy, 'He shall make His grave with the rich in His death.' All the citizens knew His body had been there, knew that it was there no longer, knew that the Roman seal had been on the stone and that it was treason to break it. Yes, why not punish somebody? All these things demanded explanation. They were brought to the knowledge of the Government. Why did the investigation stop?"

"Pilate knew that for envy they had delivered Him," replied Mattie unexpectedly. It was in her Sunday-school lesson. Gilbert enjoyed her reasoning.

"And then," urged the minister, "all these witnesses had themselves been incredulous. They were not superstitious, gullible men. Instead of inventing or believing a fable, the disciples had to be convinced. It took the resurrected Jesus over a month to do it. Life-long opinions had to be given up.

The witnesses themselves were doubters who had been compelled to yield to definite proofs."

"Your argument is cumulative and very fair," again commented Gilbert, thoughtfully.

"Yes, and further," replied the preacher, "we cannot ignore the revolution in the characters of these witnesses under the proved facts. A lie cannot make the liar better; it vitiates and debases. That demonstrated historical fact made the disciples braver, purer, nobler, holier. This could never have been the result of a concocted falsehood."

"Anybody can see that," said Mattie. "Anybody but a goose," said Margie. Her reasoning always pressed to a climax.

"These men," Mr. Blaston proceeded, "staked their lives, their honor, their religion, their hope—temporal and eternal, upon this attested fact. How rash and senseless to have encountered excommunication, poverty, persecution, and death unless absolutely sure of the evidences!"

"To the unprejudiced this point is well taken and hard to combat," said Gilbert.

"Yes, the marvelous power of that corroborated and avowed fact," replied the minister, "was seen by all observers. Communities and nations saw that it inspired timid men and women to the most splendid heroism. The ardor and enthusiasm of apostolic days must be accounted for. The resurrection alone accounts for it."

The little girls were looking out upon the grave of their baby brother. Did they feel that the argument concerned him?

"Christianity," urged the bereaved preacher, "is itself an infallible proof. Its origin and achievements demand explanation. It can be traced directly to that new sepulchre. No resurrection, no Christianity. It could not have wrought its marvelous triumphs of grace with a glaring falsehood on its forehead. The Church is built upon an empty grave."

Gilbert turned to the window and saw his mother's resting-place. Was not her love of the Church and of the sepulchre immortal?

"That striking change in the Sabbath," proceeded the

speaker, "the change from the seventh to the first day of the week, is a living proof and impregnable. When did it occur and why? An authoritative sacred custom is hard to alter. If Christ rose not, to tamper with the Fourth Commandment was sacrilege. And yet the change was made and was radical; it was combated, but successful; and it remains until this day with nothing under heaven to justify and account for it except the resurrection. Every week the Lord's day takes the witness-stand. Let the doubter cross-examine it."

"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning," Mattie quoted, "they came unto the sepulchre, bringing spices, and they found the stone rolled away."

"Yes," answered Mr. Blaston, well-pleased, "and soon there was great cheer, and it was to last. One of the most touching proofs of the resurrection is found in the comfort, rich and sustaining, which that attested fact has brought to millions through nineteen hundred years. Myriads of death-beds and myriads of the bereaved have been consoled by the doctrine. For out of that vacated tomb comes the bright assurance that all these tombs are to be vacated. 'Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first-fruits of them that slept.' That victory over the grave guarantees all the victories.

"Oh, have the triumphs of the dying and the sweet submission of their loved ones through all these centuries been delusions and fallacies? I sit yonder by the side of my dead and I seem to see the sepulchre that was built by Joseph of Arimathea. I catch the words of the angels, 'He is risen; He is not here.' I know what that carries with it—the divinity of Christ, the might of the supernatural, the credibility of the miracles; for here is the miracle of miracles, His avowed power to lay down His life and to take it again, and now the sublime consummation of it. Thinking of the first-fruits and the after-fruits, Ridge Park becomes effulgent."

The little girls said quietly, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" They, too, like Gilbert, had been reading about the children in the Temple.

When Mr. Blaston had gone, Mattie said:

"He talks like Cousin Margaret, but not so sweetly.

When she tells about these things, her face shines like one of those angels at the sepulchre."

"If she had been in Jerusalem," said Margie, "she would have carried spices, too."

So they prattled on, idealizing Cousin Margaret until Gilbert idealized her too, even forgetting the wonderful voice in the temple and the nymph of the white bonnet.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SEXTON'S STORY.

"They may think," said old Charon one evening after his labors were done, "that the sexton has no feelin's because he digs the graves and covers up their loved ones. It does look hard. The clods seem heartless, and sound as if they were fallin' upon the bosoms of those who stand around. I throw 'em in as light as I can and I keep thinkin' that the clods will not stay there always. I dig my graves on purpose for 'em to be opened when Jesus is ready.

"No one need to fear that the sexton does not care. Yonder is my own lot—a present from the Association—and my wife and children are lyin' there. Trouble was all along the way, and some things worse than death.

"For there are things worse than death and places worse than the graveyard. The places where children are tempted and where the darlin's go wrong; the places of disobedience and ingratitude; the places where the lessons of childhood are forgotten and where the taints get in; the places where dishonor falls and the heart-break comes; these are darker spots than any midnight at Ridge Park.

"The world may serve the bairns far worse than the sexton does. When they treat father and mother badly and go back on 'em and leave the bruises bleedin', it is ten times more bitter than buryin' 'em.

"It tears and smarts, but sometimes it seems to me that those who bring the young out here ought not to weep too inconsolably. Said a good mother whose son was in the jail, 'I buried three of my children in infancy and I am glad. They, at least, are safe.' To her they will always be her innocent babies.

"No, there are no drinkin' dives among the graves, no gambling dens, no bad men and women to lead the weak astray. The cemetery harbors no snares for the young. The dead set no pitfalls.

"Said another mother, 'I want to keep my two last children young as long as I can. The anxieties for them are not as heavy as for those grown up. The purest pleasures are with the little ones.'

"So it is. Those buried grow no older. The little graves stay little and know no temptations. They are my pets.

"Yonder are the lovin' girls by the side of their baby brother. Now is that not a picture as pretty as was ever painted? Ridge Park is an artist!

"The children are lookin' this way. I put an extra touch about that short grave to-day, and they are grateful and want to tell me. My own children gone, I would like to talk to 'em. Here they come. I feel as if angels were comin'. There are many beneath the ground who will be just as pretty some day."

"My dear old Charon," said Mattie, "it was you, I know. It was nice in you to treat our baby so. You must have had babies."

"Yes," answered the sexton; "but they would not stay babies. I wish they had. But they kept growin' and growin' like some other youngsters I know, until they grew clear away from us. They are all gone. Now I am left to love other people's children. That 's the way it works."

"Poor Charon!" sympathized the younger sister; "you were very kind, and I knew there was something that did it. Living out here so close to heaven has made you gentle and good."

"Yes, it 's like bein' on the road up there," said the older. "There are so many in heaven who have left their bodies here with you, waiting."

"And then," said Margie, "you see so many coming out here who are cheerful about it and know that God did right. It 's as good as a Sunday-school."

"You two little ladies are my Sunday-school," answered Charon. "You are like two Sunday-school songs which we want sung over and over. And now I want to tell you a story."

"Oh, do!" exclaimed they both in concert; "one just like you told us before."

"Once upon a time," he began, "there were two little girls named Mattie and Margie."

"Why, that 's sister and I!" interrupted the older. "We are not worth putting in a story."

"We 'd look very silly in a story—dear, dear!" insisted the younger.

"But it was neither one of you," replied the sexton. "It was before you were born. So I 'll begin again. There were two little girls named Mattie and Margie—as sweet as any others that ever had those names. They lived in sunshiny farm-houses that faced each other from opposite hills like those two neighborly hills out yonder. They were distant cousins, but that was not the only reason for likin' each other. They loved each other because they couldn't help it; for they were both very lovable, and were fair in their plays, and always told the truth, and were unselfish and exchanged dolls and never fussed."

"Any girl of that kind would be lovable," declared Mattie.

"Are you making it up, or were they sure-enough girls?" inquired Margie.

"I shall have to begin again," answered Charon. "There were two little sure-enough girls named Mattie and Margie, who had no idea that so many questions would be asked about them in the after-days. They loved each other and were Christian girls and of course they never fussed. I knew them from the start, for I was waitin'-boy about one of the houses and was not big enough to dig graves. I was afraid of graves in those foolish times. How little do folks know what they are comin' to!

"I used to carry notes for 'em when it was muddy, and sometimes when it wasn't, for they must either be together or hear from each other every day. How those important letters flew—love-letters, they called 'em. I was to carry sure-enough love-letters in the years to come."

"They didn't know it then," said Mattie, rather protestingly.

"They had no idea of it," reiterated Margie, with usual emphasis. "You are getting ahead of your story."

"Ahead somewhat," he answered smilingly. "No, of

course they didn't know it. They never do. It is the same way to-day. But that sure-enough Mattie and Margie were happy as could be and cared nothin' about the future. That bird in the poplar yonder is not more light-hearted and gay. Little girls' hearts are made just like the birds' hearts anyway.

"They used to read their letters to me. I remember some of 'em still. They made the life of the waitin'-boy bearable and brighter. They did not know that the orphan was to be a grave-digger and would have to dig a grave for at least one of them. I can repeat some of those short letters yet, and here is one:

"'*My dearest Margie,*—Papa is very sick, and I shall not be able to come over to-day. They walk softly about the floor and I feel dreadfully. I watch their faces and I see that all try to be very kind to me. They seem to pity me. If papa should die, I believe I would die, too.'

"And then I took back this answer:

"'*My darling Mattie,*—Your letter makes me cry. I want to be near enough to hold you in my arms. Nobody can die unless God lets them, and we will both beg Him not to take your papa now. It would break both our hearts.'

"And God did not take Mattie's father then, but some years afterward he passed away. Poor Mattie was fatherless, with all which that means.

"I saw the sexton tearin' the ground and diggin' the grave and I thought he was rough and barbarous. Little did I dream that I was to dig Mattie's grave! The waitin-boy would be waitin' on her still.

"This is the way that Margie wrote to her friend on the day of her papa's funeral—both now about sixteen years old:

"'*My darling Mattie,*—God is not unkind, though it looks so. God can't be unkind, you know. My heart bleeds by the side of yours. It is true, I suppose, that there is no pain of the body in dying, and it is pleasant to remember how peacefully and beautifully your father went. You and I will try to be as good as he was, and to go that way.'

"But Mattie took a dislike to death. She felt herself wronged and robbed. The coffin, the hearse, and graveyard

were hateful. She was a Christian, but older Christians get that way sometimes. She thought of death as her enemy, a cruel tyrant, and she almost shuddered when she knew that she, too, must die. She worried herself about it. Once Margie wrote her a letter like this:

"'*My darling Mattie,*—I know you will triumph. You are God's child and He always takes care of His child. He knows how to turn death's frowns into smiles and He will do it. Don't bother yourself about the time or the way. They say that one scarcely ever suffers in dying—that it 's simply going to sleep. When the hour comes, abundant grace comes—the soul's amen and then heaven. I 've no doubt but your father will come to meet you.'

"After awhile I began to carry those other notes. I am not ahead of my story now. They both had suitors and it kept me busy. They did not read me any of that kind of letters, but Charon knew, for about that time he had an affair of his own. Under it all, Mattie and Margie had bloomed out like pinks. The parlors on the two laughin' hills had shinin' lights o' evenin's.

"I knew very well the day they became engaged. Girlhood's friendships are very beautiful, and they had flowed on together in the same channel and had reached the same landing-place. You could tell it by their new womanly ways. A sparkle was all over 'em both. I thought that Mattie's sadness would now take wings and fly away like the moanin' doves.

"But in the very midst of it all I carried this note:

"'*My dearest Margie,*—I am happy, but the clouds come in too. He is a noble young man, a bright buoyant Christian. But I am bringing him a heart still rebellious against my father's grave, and a poor weak faith that still quakes at the thought of death. What a dowry is this with which to burden a Christian husband!'

"I took back the following little bit of sunshine:

"'*My darling Mattie,*—You are going to make one of the sweetest little wives in the world. And so am I. We will be models for all time to come. God will give away the brides and the grooms will think themselves kings. Your father

will bless the marriage, too, and happiness is coming. James will love you only the more fondly because you are fatherless.'

"The weddings came and went and the parlors on the hills were shinin' like diamonds. The waitin'-boy was jolly as anybody.

"In course of time a bird which they called a baby flew down and alighted in Mattie's home. What a sweet little mother she made! But there were hours when she grew sad again because the grandfather could not have seen and loved the child. She did not know how soon he was to see her.

"Much as God was doing for her, she still drooped back into the past sometimes and feared at times for her future. Death was still a tyrant and dreaded. Of course she did not inflict these things upon her husband. She was amiable and good, and even tried not to inflict them upon her God. She was ashamed of the shadows and kept them within. But what if she should be taken from her little daughter, and unprepared!

"It was to be otherwise—the babe was to go to the grandfather. The baby girl faded into the skies. Mattie's tears flowed as they had never done before, but now a wonderful thing was to happen.

"Babies leave a great void in papa's and mamma's arms, and the eyes must drip, but, with the father and babe now together up above the blue, the heavens began to come nearer to Mattie. The graveyard all at once became beautiful because of the longer and shorter graves. Her husband's love and the love of her friends and of her God seemed to envelop her more soothingly than ever before. She even began to visit desolate mothers and to tell them of the rich comfort of the Gospel. Thus she wrote to her childhood's playmate:

"'*My dearest Margie*,—I am no longer in bondage. My stupid faith was not murdered, but strengthened and vivified by baby's going. Never was anything more lovely than her dying. Babies teach us all how to die. Religion has grown dearer and the thoughts of the hereafter brighter. I shall see my father and my baby together some day. I am taking

hold of my duties, and even cheering my husband. This is what grace can do. I am as willing to go as to stay.'

"I carried back a prompt reply, that read as follows:

"'*My darling Mattie,*—I have been waiting for this, for I knew it was coming. Grace always gives the victory, and my Mattie had a great work yet to do. You were to be better for your gloomy hours and the conquest, and you would know better how to help the saddened. God would give you the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, and you were to be a joy in the land. And your death-bed was to be sublime.'

"And all this came to pass. It is about time my little sweethearts were going home, and I must shorten my story. A baby boy came into the home after awhile and grew up to manhood. She was great in grace and very happy and made all others happy. And in time she died. So they called it, but there never was a more glorious hour. She saw her father and her babe waiting, and she went with them."

"Now tell us who were these sure-enough children—please tell us before we go," said both of the little girls at once.

"Margie was your own mother," answered the sexton, "and Mattie was the mother of a handsome gentleman who is courtin' you both for your cousin's sake."

CHAPTER IX.

The White Sunbonnet.

"Of course you will marry some day. I shall not be with you always, and even if I were, the love of a true wife will not conflict with the love of your mother. Both are necessary to the highest manliness. And you will make a good husband. I am sure of that, for you have made a good son. You are too sensible to hunt a wife in cold blood. Put a high estimate upon womanhood; be chivalrous; admire no inferior standards; wait until one comes who inspires all your better nature; then give her your heart fully and go forward growing in grace.

"Good husbands make good wives, and good wives make good husbands. The right woman is waiting somewhere and in God's own time will come into the daylight."

Thus spake Gilbert's mother not many weeks before she died. He then thought that he would never care for any other woman. The right one had not appeared, and he had no inclination to hunt her.

Once more the young man was in his accustomed place by the grave. The thrush was in the poplar and seemed to love the cemetery as much as he did. The light which lay upon the adjoining hills was pensive and dreamy. The blue of the sky was like the blue of the sea when waves are lulled. His mother seemed very near.

Gilbert reviewed again Mr. Blaston's clear demonstration of the resurrection of Jesus, and then he pondered once more the sweet-voiced advocacy in the chapel of the recognition of the resurrected dead. Meditation is congenial to the graveyard.

The departed seem to come back and to be interested, too, and to mingle in the diviner themes.

After awhile Gilbert aroused and said:

"Where are my little girls? They are becoming essen-

tial to my better moods. The dead were very beautiful; children are the most beautiful people above the ground. These two candid hearts fascinate me. I am ready to believe anything they believe and to love anybody they love. To be willing to leave their plays, and over and over, for the grave of their baby brother, proves the material of which their souls are made.

"Children are the most trustworthy judges of human nature. That cousin of theirs must be superb. They are filling my fancy with the angelic woman. Is she the heroine in my mother's prophecy who is some day to emerge from the shadows and make a man of me?"

Gilbert had not been noticing this evening's other visitors to the cemetery. Those who come to this hill are seeking the dead, not the living.

At this moment a widow sat by a decorated tomb, and the owner of the white sunbonnet had passed from Martha's grave over to her side. The low conversation was to have a marked influence upon Gilbert's destiny, though he heard no syllable. The widow was saying:

"I want him back—yes, I want him—and yet it would be supremely unkind and unwifely to recall him from the heights. The graveyard ought to end all selfishness. It is an outlaw here.

"He was Nature's nobleman—God did the rest. As a husband, he was God's pattern—loyal, considerate, magnanimous, vigilant for my good. He loved me and I loved him. When I think of all this, the world becomes a blank.

"Matrimony is a sifter of character. It tests the good in us and the evil. I expected too much. His attentions and devotion spoiled me instead of making me better. I wanted him to think of nothing else on earth but me. I would absorb him wholly.

"Selfishness, my child, is the bane of wedded life. With such a husband and such a God, a selfish wife is a monster.

"Of course there were differences; these things will be; differences of opinion, differences of plans. I made his yielding a test of his love. If he was firm, even in the right, I

doubted his affection for me. I suppose I was jealous of his conscience.

"At heart I quarreled with his strength of character, while, if he had been weak, opinionless, vacillating, I 've no doubt but I would have condemned his effeminacy. How unreasonable we sometimes are! It is sad that it should require the graveyard to convince us of it.

"I shall never forget the first issue I made with him. He had indulged me in everything—even my caprices. No bride had been happier. A difference arose, and he was right, and I was too silly to admit it. I called his love in question. With that accusation I expected to rule him. I can see the surprise, the incredulity, and then his look of disappointment in me.

"It is a perilous hour when the bridegroom awakes to disappointment in his bride. How much of the salutary romance of marriage we may devastate in one moment of folly!

"But the years continued full of his generosity. I would repent, and then be as inconsiderate and narrow as ever. On his death-bed he spoke of my faithfulness and goodness; talked as fondly as on the wedding morn, so noble was he; but in the light of his great heart I see my own shortcomings only the more clearly now.

"When the hour comes, my child, put off all selfishness when you put on the bridal veil. Otherwise, it will be adorning a ghastly idol. Yes, and it will plant the future cemetery with thorns. The graveyard is a poor place for settling up old disagreements. Marry no one whose principles, sentiments, beliefs, and even prejudices you cannot respect. Never drive his love to the wall. 'Above all things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.' "

Far more eloquent than the academic porches of Athens, the graveyard is a school of philosophy. Awhile ago upon this hill we heard a bereaved husband deploring his want of appreciation of a deceased wife. Now we have listened to a widowed bosom lamenting her treatment of a buried husband. Such are the wholesome lectures, and many in number, which the cemetery delivers on wedded life.

The young girl must have been wise beyond her years.

She felt that these regrets, a wounded heart dwelling upon the darker memories, might become morbid and darken the soul's look heavenward. Grief itself might become selfish, intensifying the very trait which she bewailed, and blinding her eyes to the claims of living friends upon her. Thus the maiden spoke:

"The community regarded you and your husband as an excellent couple and admired your home. We know that you are very lonely. It is pleasant to think that you were both useful Christians. His work is done, only as he continues to work through you. Your work remains, and the grace of God and the memories of your husband will help you to perform it. Can I call for you to-morrow to go with me to visit another widow far more sad than you?—poor Mrs. Walton; her husband gone, and not a Christian, and her own faith shadowed."

"Oh! I am unfit," the lady answered; "my own faith is clouded and I myself need consolation."

"Then go and carry consolation to one worse afflicted," replied the maiden. "Become interested in someone else. Turn resolutely away from your own broodings to comfort the uncomforted. Take the Bible truth with you. Repeat to her the promises of God. As you do this, the truth will come home to your own heart. God turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends.

"Will you bear with me? When my sister died, my whole soul protested. She was all that was good and pure and lovable—my better life. Why should she die? I did not know it, but my whole being was in rebellion. Without her, I recoiled from life's duties. I could not face them alone. One of my class sickened and was near to death. I became absorbed in the child, stayed day and night by her side, and forgot selfish grief. Then I visited a friend who had lost her sister, too, and was overborne. I told her of the Great Sympathizer and, while I talked, He came sweetly to us both, and the selfishness of my grief passed out. I will call for you to-morrow."

Gilbert was not now to know of his personal interest in this conversation. When he looked across the grounds, he

saw the white dress and white sunbonnet, as pure as his white rose, returning to Martha's grave, and to the side of a gentleman whom she evidently knew well. Her figure was the perfection of symmetry, and her movements in exquisite grace.

Gilbert's admiration of the beautiful and tasteful was almost a tyranny. A vivid imagination aided and abetted. The hidden face and hidden soul—what must the jewel be in such a casket.

The gentleman whom she approached must have been equally impressed. His appearance across the yard was pleasing, and, as he rose to receive her, there was something of the same graceful carriage. Soon the two, certainly in close sympathy, were at work together about the grave.

Gilbert was an intent observer. Obviously there was no barrier of conventionality nor any embarrassment between the two. Brother and sister, husband and wife, could not have understood each other better. She looked then like a dream of the old masters.

For the first time in his life there passed through the bosom of Gilbert Wayne a twinge of something like jealousy. Had a kindred interest in God's Acre, had Martha's grave and his mother's grave, been gradually making this unknown damsel a part of his inner life? Had there been growing upon him a claim of proprietorship in the bereaved with which he resented any interference? And now was the proprietorship passing unexpectedly to that handsome escort?

Promptly Gilbert became oblivious of other fancies; of the fascinating talker in the chapel, and the picturesque favorite of the little girls. For the time even Mattie and Margie were forgotten. And this was the staid worker in the office, the sober and phlegmatic man of business!

After a moment he stirred impatiently and turned his back. He trained carefully the white rose now blooming in rare beauty. How pure and celestial the petals! Every twig had on its head a snowy sunbonnet floating on the zephyrs.

"What would my mother say?" he queried. "What would be her estimate of her boy? Gilbert Wayne, I've called you a simpleton before—now I know you are. What is that sen-

timental maiden to you? What under heaven do you know about her? She may be as hideous as the Veiled Prophet of Khorassan. Suppose that lovesick swain is her suitor. Suppose she loves him? What have you got to do with it, Mr. Wayne? I wish my little girls were here."

But someone else was there. The unknown knight had strolled across the yard, observing the different tombs and reading the inscriptions. He now approached Gilbert courteously and made some inquiry about a certain family lot. He was indeed remarkably handsome, his manner and voice very attractive. In all this there was for Gilbert a reminder of something in the past.

"This is a singularly beautiful and captivating place," he said. "The impulse which prompted the purchase and dedication was commendable and holy. All honor to the originators and managers! Upon this serene elevation, the community should raise a monument to those men. The protectors of the dead are the benefactors of the living. This is the mightiest pulpit in the county. A stranger judges a community by its graveyards."

The two passed slowly from lot to lot, the visitor asking many questions interspersed with striking remarks. He was unquestionably an intelligent, cultured gentleman. No wonder that the lorn damsel liked him. For the first time in the presence of men, Gilbert felt in himself an unpleasant sense of inferiority.

And then another marked event occurred. The two were now not very far from Martha's grave, reading another inscription, when at the predestined moment the maiden was passing from the hydrant, carrying a sprinkled vase of flowers. Sunbonnets know how to be coquettish in the breeze. Just as Gilbert looked up, the bonnet was pushed back by the south wind, and the face slightly uncovered. It was but a moment—the merest partial glimpse. Perhaps that vivid imagination was again in the ascendant. To poor Gilbert Wayne the glimpse was entrancing, passing all his former standards of loveliness. No roses nor lilies could compare. The eyes were revelations. And over and through it all, the light of the soul rested like the sunrise upon the hills.

Why could not that tantalizing bonnet have fallen entirely away?

After the damsel and the stranger had gone, Gilbert tried his skill again upon old Charon. Who was this new visitor to the cemetery? Had he ever assisted at that grave before?

But the philosophic sexton evaded, volubly. The cemetery was attracting great attention; the splendid order in which it was kept won all observers; the people were proud of it and talked about it to newcomers; and newcomers wanted to see it; this would be so more and more as the years went on; it was an attractive and wholesome place of resort; and, as for the sexton, he was always ready to give information.

After Gilbert, thus lucidly informed, had left, old Charon again soliloquized:

"Mighty smairt—mighty smairt. Why didn't he ask Martha? Oh, no; graveyards keep their own counsels. The boy's jealous—that's the trouble. That's one of the necessary phases. Why don't the coward go straight at her—with pick and shovel, like I dig graves—and dig it out? That breeze did the business; struck him like a cyclone. No sleep for him to-night. South winds will bother many a nap. Charon is not going to spoil the fun. Let 'em work it out—let 'em work it out."

CHAPTER X.

THE VOICE.

"It is full time for me to beat a retreat from the realms of romance. It is really becoming troublesome. The world was empty; the graveyard its only remaining charm. Naturally I indulged a temporary interest in other stricken ones. A woman in tears comes close to any manly heart. Bereavement sometimes brings out what is best and supremest in womanhood.

"And then a heart torn and bereft, melted and made tender by passionate sorrow, its depths broken up, becomes very susceptible to other emotions.

"Suddenly I find myself enlisted more than I ever bargained for—and absurdly split up between three. Meanwhile I know nothing tangible about either one of them.

"Gilbert Wayne, you are a bigger stupid than I took you for. You are a freak—with a wild imagination leading you a dance.

"I 'll tell you what I think you had better do—stop all this nonsense, fall in love with one of your little girls, and wait for her and yourself to reach the years of discretion. These darlings will make superb wives some day—see if they don't. True to their dead, they will be true to living loves.

"But here I would be puzzled again—only another dilemma. Would I choose the sensible, matter-of-fact Mattie, a little woman already, or the warm and impulsive Margie? There is as much difference between little girls as between women. Is the deliciously deliberate older sister better, or the intense and straightforward younger charmer? It would break my heart to decide which is the more lovable. It would duplicate my present game of hide and seek. Evidently I had better drop all besides and stand by the glorified."

These were Gilbert's reflections a few evenings after his glimpse beneath the sunbonnet. For what did he really

know of her—what except the wonderfully perfect form and the partly revealed face, and the pathetic fidelity to a grave? Yes, and one item of knowledge more: the good understanding, very lover-like, existing between her and the stranger. The two little girls' high estimate of the character of their Cousin Margaret was assuredly more entitled to consideration by a rational bachelor—if there is such a bachelor—than all this glamor of a betrothed sunbonnet.

Gilbert's mind soon passed more pleasantly to the dead:

"There never was another woman like her. She was a born mother. She was all good mothers in one. It was motherhood both concentrated and broad; both domestic and all-comprehensive; loving her own until all humanity was her own. While she was just one sweet little mother, she was as large as the earth. She had a motherly feeling toward everything: the kittens and the chickens, the flowers and the stars, the happy and the sufferers. She was with the Virgin Mother in the inn at Bethlehem and at the cross. Cruel grave, to engulf all this! Barbarous destiny, to blot such virtue out!"

Unnoticed, a lowering cloud had been gathering on the horizon. He had not seen the increasing darkness, nor heard the ominous mutterings of thunder. Nor had he paid any attention to the other visitors nor to their withdrawal before the coming storm. His thoughts continued:

"It would not be safe for me to marry. I would resent the willingness of any woman to take her place. No, no, my queen; an untoward fate has taken you away, but your grave is left. It is enough. You shall have no rival."

A peal of thunder and drops of rain aroused him, and he saw what was coming. He was glad; he had desired to be alone upon that hill in a storm. He arose and sought shelter in the porch of the chapel. He remembered afresh what he once heard while sitting there.

The thunders became more angry, the lightnings glared, and heavy showers began to pour. The fury of the blasts was lashing the hills. Gilbert enjoyed the tumult.

See! there lay the graves in perfect repose, undisturbed and unheeding. The monuments, white and gray, stood up

undismayed by the turmoil. The rage of the elements could not reach the dwellers there. He could not foresee how impressively this thought would soon be brought home to his heart. Through and through him Gilbert felt the sublimity of the scene.

The fury deepened. There was crash upon crash. The clouds appeared on fire. The earth seemed to be grasped and shaken by the demons of the storm.

"It is glorious," he thought, "to be out here alone. Mad winds and fierce thunderbolts for company; better associates than the hurricanes which invade the inner life, the tempests of the soul. Before these more terrific gales human hearts sometimes go down as before cyclones. But look at those tombs! I am glad that I am caught out here alone."

But not so much alone as he supposed. During an interval in the roar, he became aware, as once before, of voices in the chapel. Others besides himself had taken refuge from the torrents. He forgot the vast hurly-burly in the firmament, while, in accents that thrilled him, he heard someone saying:

"The dead do not care. They are not affrighted; they dread no harm. How calm amid the frenzy of the blasts! The living tremble, the living fly, the living shudder before the launched bolts. Our dead are sheltered and safe and unafraid."

The chords of no musical instrument were ever sweeter. Only the sweeter and more marvelous now because of the crashing peals without. It seemed to lift the listener above the black clouds into the empyrean. A moment, as of thoughtfulness, and the rich voice continued:

"The peace, the peace of the graveyard! Never has it been as attractive as now. The turmoil passes over it ignored. Here are homes that are not startled; circles that disregard all confusions; parents and children unmolested; little boys and little girls making no outcry. Even the babe knows no tremor. The cemetery takes on new beauty to-day. The storm feels its impotence here."

What endowment so superb as a pure, sweet voice! It is a climax to all other accomplishments. It is woman's

omnipotence. For is it not an index to character? Through it Christianity speaks delightfully. To the troubled heart it comes as gently and refreshingly as the falling manna to the hungry Israelite in the wilderness.

Many a fair face is blurred when the lips speak. No features, no adornments can captivate when harsh, grating tones come rasping upon shrinking nerve and wounded taste. Before the vibrant dissonance, fascination vanishes.

Gilbert sat once more spellbound. It was infinitely beyond the art of the elocutionist, for this was not art. Undoubtedly the violence abroad upon earth and sky was deepening the effect upon him. It was like the classic poet's dream of the music of the spheres which could not be interrupted by earth's turbulence. What must be the soul harmonies from which flowed such gracious melodies! Once more imagination, all alive, was swaying thought and impulse, picturing the owner of that harp of the soul.

Amid a momentary lull of the elements, Gilbert heard again:

"The graveyard will prevail. Over all confusion and danger it is to come forth conqueror. See that streak along the horizon! The storms of earth will pass away. The graves will survive them all. Their treasures will be preserved. The resurrection of the just will be stormless."

Again the crashes came and the little chapel shook. Like the delicate undertone of a flute, the words went on:

"Death is our friend—the Gospel made him so. He comes as a deliverer. Listening closely, his voice is that of Jesus on storm-tossed Gennesaret—'Peace, be still.' Who would want our saved and ascended back among earth's tornadoes? Who would expose father and mother, husband and wife, brother and sister, son and daughter, and the little infant again to the storm? They have gone in out of the raging blasts. They have been rescued."

As never before, Gilbert was thinking of his mother's pains and sorrows and disappointments—struck many a time by the tempests—and upon him was descending like a dove a spirit of submission which was new and strengthen-

ing and pleasing. How selfish grief may be! She had gone within the covert—ought the son to complain?

Again the fury raged and a thunderbolt rent a tree to the west. That low, sweet voice, only the more distinct and clear, took up the very words of his thought:

"They have gone within the covert. If we loved them, would we complain? No; we would not treat our dead unfairly. There is peace in the graveyard, there is living tranquillity beyond. Alas for the mourner who will not yield! And alas for the dazed mariner who would dash out again, with all his loved ones exposed, daring tempestous Galilee and without Jesus on board! Do you see that streak broadening in the east?"

Gilbert turned and looked that way—never had he seen such splendor. It was capturing the sky, glorifying the clouds. All at once a bright ray broke away and sought and illuminated his mother's tomb. The white rose was all in smiles. He looked at the scattering clouds and thought: "The storm itself is dying."

Strangely again, as if divining his very thought, the marvelous voice took up his exact words and turned them into a low warbling song:

"All hail, Ridge Park! the clouds are flying,
The surges lull along the shore;
The skies light up, the storms are dying,
And gladness gilds the Evermore.

"All hail, blest graves! the storms are dying,
Hushed now the rage of bitter blast;
Serene within their coverts lying,
The weary pilgrim home at last.

"All hail, blest graves! the storms are dying,
And thunders pause along the sky;
The moan suppressed, the teardrops drying,
We wait the meeting-time on high.

"All hail, Ridge Park! No pain nor sighing,
No shrinking from the Yet to Be;
The sun sets fair, the storms are dying,
Eternally, eternally!"

Clouds and thunder were sinking peacefully away. The burst of light had widened and was shining like a halo about the tranquil monuments. The thrush in the poplar seemed to be imitating the song, reëchoing softly the refrain—"Eternally, eternally!"

Gilbert resolved never again to doubt the goodness and wisdom which had welcomed the loved saint within the veil.

The voice was to follow him. He wanted it amid all the storms of life. He wanted it all the way to the grave. What must the soul be of which this was the interpreter!

A little mystery added enchantment. Her singing—was there not in the plaintive strains a hint of the past? Where had he heard it before? Or was this, too, a dream?

Once more he refused to spy upon the owner of the voice, and so he passed out of the grounds. For the time, both the sunbonnet and Cousin Margaret were forgotten.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HALF-WAY HOUSE.

Gilbert Wayne was falling in love more and more with the chapel. It was in sight of the idolized grave, and of late everything in and around it seemed to be inspiring cheerful views of death and the temporary separations.

At another evening hour he was to listen again to the fascinating voice. Looking now over the tranquil scene, no one would have thought that a tempest had lately raged over the quiet hill. The grass was only the greener, the grounds the more beautiful.

Gilbert was changing. God's messengers and messages were all about him. It is a pity that he could not have heard that morning the following conversation between his two little girls and Cousin Margaret:

"I am glad," the young lady said, "that you love the graveyard. None there will ever injure or wish harm to the children. In those graves are hundreds who have dearly loved little girls. They are good company still. They will never tempt us to do wrong."

"I am not afraid of the dead," answered Mattie. "They seem only sleeping and dreaming."

"When I 've said naughty things and go out there," moralized Margie, "I always feel mean about it. They would not like it. Cousin, would you be afraid to die?"

"I hope not, my child," replied the young woman. "It is like having friends on both sides of a river, and just passing over from one shore to the other. I had rather be on whichever side God wants me. When the Bible says that Christ abolished death, it means that for His followers He took out everything of gloom and dread. Christianity smooths all that away."

"But, cousin," said Mattie, "you are so young and sweet,

and so good to everybody, and everybody likes you so, you ought not to want to go."

"It wouldn't do at all!" asserted Margie vigorously.

"We will be neither too anxious to go nor to stay," answered their teacher. "It is all beautifully arranged. Life here is beautiful for love and service; the life beyond is only going on with the beautiful. Those who have passed up would rather that we should go to them than that they should come to us. I think that we should feel the same way."

"It seems to me that Ridge Park is the half-way house," said the thoughtful Mattie.

"I wish," interpolated Margie at a tangent, "that you could talk in your own sweet way to that sober Mr. Somebody out there whose mother lies near our baby brother."

"Young men," she answered pensively, "who feel toward treasured graves, toward these restful half-way houses, as little girls do, have something in them for both worlds to count upon."

That same morning the white sunbonnet was by Martha's resting-place, and the handsome escort of a week ago was by her side. What if Gilbert had seen this morning's bloom on her cheek! It was a face to make one oblivious to a thousand more. Her words, though full of hope and sparkle, might not have been so pleasant to Gilbert as the conversation just given. Though both conversations were unheard by him, they were leading up to great things in his future.

"You are going to leave me to-day," she was saying, "and I shall be lonely. This graveyard with its buried jewels brings living loves close together. The circle narrowing, surviving hearts need each other only the more. Long miles of land and river and mountain and sea sometimes seem to make a wider separation than death. At times you will appear to be farther away than Martha."

"But this grave," he replied, "will be the fond center around which our hearts will meet constantly. I will think of you and be with you here in spirit. And you must not feel too lonely and sad."

"Oh, no," she said, "for Martha would not like it. If our dead knew of our extravagant grief, I think that they them-

selves would be grieved. Her very sweetest smile Martha carried with her to the grave. I wish to do nothing unworthy of that smile. In all the dreams of the poets there is nothing more beautiful than the look which the home-bound spirit leaves upon the placid face—that look of holy placidity. Thus they teach us that for those prepared there is nothing repellant in the visage of God's messenger. By old and young among these buried groups, he was welcomed cordially. We think of their smiles becoming immortal up yonder, and it makes us almost homesick sometimes."

Gilbert would see these two no more together until after great surprises. At his usual evening hour, he was again by his mother's side.

"The repulsiveness of death is rapidly passing away," he said to himself. "Beautiful surroundings like these help in this. Yesterday a widow, with daughter and sons, was on her way to that fresh grave on the eastern border. For eight years the departed had faced the final hour unflinchingly. He had preached righteousness and exemplified it. He had left the world better for having lived in it. A prince had fallen in Israel.

"He was the tenth herald of the Word who had laid off his battered armor and found well-earned rest in this graveyard. He sleeps in sight of his battle-fields. The leaders and the led will here repose together until together they are crowned.

"We heard the dead preacher splendidly lauded. It was well. But many of us were thinking of the brave woman who had upheld his hands through all those years and who was now weeping tears in which there was no rebellion. She had shared every burden, pervaded every sermon, brightened every pastoral visit.

"What a blank in life for her! But on that cloudless burial morning she said, 'We will not think of sadness. There is no sadness in the ascension of the godly.' The next day, amid the sunshine, looking upon the flower-decked mound, she said, 'There is comfort in leaving him here. Old friends are all around him. And heaven seems near!'

"These are the heroines of the graveyard. They put my murmurings to shame. What if all the splendid, inspiring

things which converge upon these cemeteries could be told!"

Thus to Gilbert the grounds were alive with holy influences and he was uplifted by them. Before he knew, a minister, coming across from the grave of his wife, was by his side. Seated together, the minister said:

"The bereaved believer, whose eyes are open, has two iridescent vistas to delight and refresh him: the fields of reminiscence and the fields of anticipation. The present is the golden bridge between the two. Our departed loved ones illumine both. Christians all know at times what Paul meant when, though content to remain, he was 'in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better.'

"The weaning from earth goes on, and not unpleasantly. The anchor loosens and the prow turns to the farther shore. Each ascension from our circles makes the climes over there more real. The past and the future are not far apart. The loves of days gone by and the loves of days to come throw kindred spells upon us.

"The good wife, the better part of my being, impelled while she lived; she impels even more mightily since her death. The Church of God can never estimate her indebtedness to her parsonage queens.

"I have reached a pleasing equilibrium. I am in no haste to go—I do not care particularly to stay. There is a time appointed; it is the right time. I see nothing repellant in the valley. The helper of my many laborious years passed through without stumbling; so will I. She is lingering for me at the portals. Her sunshiny face and tones have not lost their charm. I catch her voice in the summer breeze and in the birds' songs.

"I do not come here because I am sad and unmanned; I come for unbroken companionship. I occupy the attitude of one waiting, not impatiently, but in assured expectancy. Willing duty for awhile yet, and then the willing release. She sweetly sleeps, but her memory sleeps not. Her grave is like the mountain ozone. 'When God wills,' let this be our watchword."

All these things were doing Gilbert good. God's provi-

dences were melting away all that was harsh in his bereavement. When the minister was gone, the young man continued his revery:

"That thought of an equilibrium is wholesome and sane. But nothing except Christianity can achieve that miracle. Then the worker is no longer hampered. He has all his moral force in hand. Paul was on tiptoe to take flight, but he reflected, 'Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.' The crown in full sight, but for the good of others willing to postpone for awhile the waiting glories. Death was dealing with a hero. I wonder whose happiness is involved in Gilbert's staying?"

He rose and strolled about the cemetery, the only visitor now in sight. He loved to be here after all had gone. Surrounded only by the dead, he felt nearer the borders. He found that Martha's grave had been cared for. Unconsciously, as often of late, his steps tended toward the chapel. The carol was warbling from the poplar.

Gilbert was scarcely seated when he became aware of words in the chapel, and strangely in unison with his last thoughts. It was again that most musical of voices.

"It would be unnatural," she was saying, "for the young to be impatient to go. This is a lovely world and there is much in it worth living for. It is a grand arena for doing, for improving, for developing, for achieving. There are resplendent deeds yet awaiting the aspirant. There are lives to be made better, hearts to cheer, homes to be built and adorned, the doomed to be rescued. Is life worth living? It is worth living!"

How strong and sustained the tones, and yet conversational and delicately feminine! Deborah's could not have been more sonorous when intoning her inimitable lyric on the battle-field, and Mary's could not have been sweeter in the Magnificat. Low and rich, Gilbert felt the words throbbing through his life-blood. She continued:

"The aged may grow weary and long for the promised rest. Middle years may have completed their work and been given early promotion. Youth, broken in health, may sigh for the wholesome climes. The strong and vigorous should go bold-

ly forward and round out their days in victories. To make our graves restful, there should be no loitering by the way.

"'England,' said the great admiral, 'expects every man to do his duty.' Said one greater than Nelson, 'I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work.' Ridge Park expects every immortal to do his duty."

Gilbert knew that his mother would have endorsed every word. He felt ashamed of his late despondency and his indifference to the claims of life. The voice vibrated into a minor key:

"When all is done, then we will fold our hands for repose. One resting yonder, after a life of zealous toil and great usefulness in the vineyard, laid those zealous hands quietly upon her breast, closed her own eyes, and went like an infant to her slumbers. It was a picture of peace. No allotted task unperformed, the grave wooes with its lullabies. Out yonder by the side of the loved, a cool spot awaits the victor. Every one may choose his place of retreat, safe haven for weather-beaten voyager. The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of all the living in heaven and on earth, has arranged the reunions."

There was an interval of silence, only filled by the thrush in the tree-tops. In low tones another spoke, but Gilbert could not hear. Then, clear as the thrush's notes, with the warmth of a woman's bosom all through the rhythm, the melodious utterance came again:

"Ready to work while the Master calls,
Though shoulders droop and the burden galls;
Following close where the Savior leads,
Hand and heart for God-like deeds.

"Ready to wait till the Master calls,
Though time seems long and the daylight falls;
Beyond the cross the crown in view,
Eyes on the East and pulse-beat true.

"Ready to go when the Master calls,
Dropping the chain that now enthralls;
Gladly loosening and away
To breathe the balms of Endless Day.

"Ready to rise when the Master calls,
Breaking the supulchre's grassy walls;
Victorious now through Him that died,
Ridge Park redeemed and glorified!"

Gilbert Wayne moved slowly and thoughtfully away with the sun-setting, for the place whereon he trod was holy ground. A revolution was coming in his life-plans. As true to memory as ever, he would no longer nurse his grief and let it weaken him. More than once he said:

"I wish that my mother could have heard her. And perhaps she did."

CHAPTER XII.

The Lilies.

A neat little monument, not meant to attract wide notice, stands at the head of two short graves. Adult relatives had come and lain down near them, but they had gone first. Many a little child has led the way. Other children had been born and had been growing up to maturity within the home, but the places of these two had never been filled. Lovely babes may follow in the track of lovely babes, but the one that dies is never supplanted, but remains a joy forever.

The preëmpted nook from which the glorified infant goes not out is the coziest and most sacred in the house.

In his quarrel with destiny, reassertive though gradually yielding, Gilbert was one day saying to himself:

"The whys still infest the cemetery and tantalize my wayward faith. There may be reasons for other bereavements, but why should war be waged upon the cradle and the crib? If a human foe should murder the little ones, the whole world would resent the horror. Herod's slaughter of the innocents is still unforgiven by an indignant race. But remorseless death has slain its myriads more. Why should my mother's heart have been torn before I was born? Why should Mattie and Margie be made to smart beneath the loss of their baby brother?"

When Gilbert looked up he saw the hearse entering the grounds and in it a little white coffin. At the new diminutive grave, the minister quoted the following words:

"My Beloved is gone down into His gardens, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens and to gather lilies." (Cant. 6:3.)

Gilbert thought the text very beautiful. Bunches of white lilies were now covering the grave while others were growing all about the yard. The minister spoke feelingly:

"Christ is interested in our favorite flowers. He seems to have had His own blooming favorites, too. He enjoyed them

and preached about them. He used them to help and cheer the faith of His people. They supplied Him a text, while He pointed to their snowy petals and said, 'Think about the lilies, listen to the lilies, emulate the lilies, consider the lilies.'

"To this end, He puts the lilies in His earthly gardens. These children of the hills and the valleys, like the children of His people, would not have been there without His planting. The sweet flower and the sweet babe are alike His gift. He has His chosen gardens, the household and the church, and He visits these enclosures. He goes down there.

"He calls them His beds of spices. He tells of the pomegranates, the camphor, the spikenard, the saffron, the calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh, and aloes, and all the chief spices. He gives and breathes the perfumes. He imparts the zest to home affections and home endearments. He supplies rare fragrance to faith, love, and hope. There are no richer odors. And Jesus goes down there. His presence brings out the spices.

"Our Savior is described as feeding in these charming lily gardens. He regales Himself and the flowers together. There is no lack of refreshment. The viands of His grace are not stinted. When we open the door, He comes in and sups with us and we with Him in the midst of the blossoms. He invigorates for the time of need. From Him our flowers derive all their sweetness. From Him we receive the blooms of trust and submission and gracious resignation. There are no more salutary balms. 'Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south, and blow upon My garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.'

"In His own best time and way, Jesus gathers the lilies. There is no accident to the buds or blossoms. There is no cruel frost of fate. There is no harsh blast of chance. The Gardener makes no mistakes.

"For it is not a soulless stranger that bears away our blooms. We know Him and He knows us. It is One whom the text, in its first word, speaks of as 'ours.' As we think of *our* father or *our* mother or *our* friend or *our* protector, so we can think of Him, too, with a personal appropriating interest

and affection—Him, in fact, who planted and beautified and loved the lilies.

"So we may be sure that it is no unkind hand that transplants. He made the tender petals and He will deal with them tenderly. He who while on earth took the little children in His arms without hurting them, knows how to handle them gently still. No lily has ever been defaced by His touch.

"No, no; for it is our Beloved who gathers the lilies. I know no more winsome, no more consoling fact. The thought itself is like the odor of flowers. We sorely miss the plucked blossoms, but we know Who has done it. It is He of whom the song sings cheeringly, 'My Beloved is mine and I am His; He feedeth among the lilies.'

"We remember, too, how in this sweet song, itself a lullaby, He is Himself called the Lily of the Valleys. He took to Himself the flower-nature and the child-nature. He became a little innocent babe, very lovely to His mother and to old Simeon and others. He wants our babies to be kept white and spotless like He was. This is one reason He takes them away. Then we know it will be so.

"Our Beloved, to this end, gathers them into His covenant. The promises bloom in the same lily gardens. The promises rock the cradle and smooth the dying beds. They share their whiteness with the lilies. They offer to keep them white.

"Our Beloved gathers them into His loving embrace. The Gardener is fond of His flowers. No father or mother was ever more considerate and vigilant. He loves our frail treasures. Thus He is spoken of also as the Faithful Shepherd who 'shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom.'

"Our Beloved gathers and includes them in His eternal purpose and plan. Not a sparrow falls, and not a babe falls, without His notice. It is all divinely arranged. That infant has been no more the sport of chance than an empire or a world. Your child has had its mission as surely as the infant Jeremiah or the infant child of Hannah, or of Elizabeth, or of the Virgin of Nazareth.

"Our Beloved gathers the lilies into the gardens above. He gathers them away from the storms and the stains, away from the pains and heart-breaks. Whatever doubts may harass about the older dead, there can be no doubt about the babes. Said the Beloved, 'In heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father.' No innocence of their own saves, but the blood of the atonement guarantees their eternal innocence. There comes no defilement upon the transplanted lilies. Heaven is radiant with their whiteness, for Solomon in all His glory was not arrayed like one of those."

Gilbert was glad that he had stood with the bereaved and heard the words. He had reached a point where he was not slow to censure any returning doubts and complaints. Whenever he wavered, God sent some influence promptly to combat the temptation. Now he shared the joy which his ascended mother must have felt in meeting with her first born. He recalled many an incident which showed that his little sister, whom he had never seen, had never gone out of the family life, and he felt what the preacher had said about the mission of the lilies.

After the services, Mattie and Margie spoke to the minister and took him across to their own lot. Gilbert followed, and also the lady mentioned in the beginning of this chapter and honored in being the mother of two infants in the skies. She evidently desired to talk with the preacher.

"Here is where *our* lily sleeps," said Mattie. "We will now always think of him as lily-like in heaven."

"It makes us proud," said Margie. "It 's the best sermon you ever preached, Mr. Summers. You talked as if you, too, had some lilies up there."

"I have," he answered softly. "I know what graveyards mean."

"I want," said the lady, "to thank you for my part of the sermon. You were speaking for the comfort of one weeping household, but there are many who have passed that way. Over yonder we have two buds yet to bloom. A quarter of a century ago they left us, a girl and a boy. Their mission has been well performed. I think we are better for their tarrying and their going. I suppose their frail little bodies have long

since mouldered into dust, but their presence has never gone out of our existence. They left a softer and softening light over heart and life. They fitted us better for rearing the children given us afterward. Through all these years they have kept heaven for us in full sight. In many an hour we have had solicitude for our growing children; for those two we have felt no uneasiness."

Gilbert thought of his questions but an hour ago, his protests against God's dealings with his two little girls and with bereaved mothers. Mr. Summers took the lady's hand and answered:

"You are preaching far better than I. It is a part of the whiteness which the lilies bestowed and did not take away. The perfume lingers."

"You understand a parent's heart," she continued, "and this makes me willing to ask certain questions that have followed me. Is it right to love the departed a little more than those that may be left, to dwell upon their greater beauty, to magnify their perfections, to yearn to them more tenderly than to the living? I hardly know how to express it. We may not ask their return; we may acquiesce in their transplanting; but may not the heart be giving them the love which belongs to the living?"

"I do not think we can love our dead too well," he answered with feeling. "They have their own place. They would not obtrude on the rights of others. They are ours as much as they ever were. Death has only added a new and refining charm. There need be no comparison or rivalry with the surviving. Were the latter to go, they would soon take on the same sacredness. The rare halo surrounding the gathered lilies is the odor of heaven about them. We have a right to think of them now as absolutely pure, and kept so. The heavenliness is the whiteness—something to prize and appropriate and draw us nearer to the Gardener. The plucked lilies open the windows as upon Patmos."

Twenty-five years had passed, but there was a new moisture in the mother's eyes. Mattie and Margie were nestling to her side. The buried children had made her love all children. She spoke again:

"You talk like one who knows and you win my confidence.

There is freedom in speaking with one who has suffered. There is another thing which has sometimes a little troubled me. I heard a preacher once tell of the child's rapid development in heaven, its sudden burst into a maturity greater than that of earthly prophet or apostle. Possibly so, but somehow I felt as if I were losing my babes anew. For twenty-five years they had remained my little pets—we growing older, not they—my babies cooing upon my bosom as in the beautiful past. Through all these years their little hands, their dimpled feet, their sweet infantile features had staid with me unchanged. Just so I had expected to receive them back to my arms in God's good time. Are mothers to be disappointed in this? Is there to be no babyhood in heaven?"

"There are many unrevealed mysteries," he replied carefully, "and we must be modest in our speculations. I don't think that mothers will be greatly disappointed; if so, it will be for the better. God wants their empty arms to take in all possible consolations. If there are any seers remaining, it is the intuitions of the mothers. I don't know, but when David took cheer from the certainty of going to his child, I don't think he expected to find him a man. The resurrected daughter of Jairus was still but twelve years old. When infants were brought to Jesus and He said, 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven,' He gave His own picture of the kingdom of grace and glory. There we were to become more like children than they were to be like us. I don't see why death should make anybody older. Barring their imperfections and infirmities, we think of our ascended loved ones as just the same. On the great Resurrection Day I expect to see this hill gladdened by all varieties of age. That, it seems to me, will be one of its crowning glories."

And now a singular thing occurred; the unexpected often comes in the remarks of the children. Mattie and Margie had not been losing a single word. Now the older said:

"The tiny body of our baby brother can't grow any in the grave. It will be no longer than when he was buried. It can only be that long when it is raised. We will all know him by that."

It was very child-like. She had spoken very slowly and as if speaking to herself. Margie responded in her decisive way:

"Oh, certainly! It can't be a man's body. I remember his very look. We will know him and love him by that."

The mother pressed the children closer to her. Her face was shining. The minister was pleased and continued:

"Yes, the Savior brought from the tomb the same body which had been placed there. There was no enlargement, no diminution. It was the identical body which they had expected to embalm that morning. That was the first fruits, God's sample of what He is going to do in all these cemeteries. Here He is coming at the last day to gather lilies. The children will find a place prepared by the children's Savior. I think they will not be oaks and poplars, but lilies still. When the exiles were to be taken back to Jerusalem, God said through His prophet Zechariah, 'And the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.' That is my favorite picture of the heavenly Jerusalem. Did not God mean it that way? The Church below and above are one, the one a type of the other. The children crying 'Hosanna!' were the Temple's chief glory at one time. It seems to me that the Upper Temple expects the children's voices. Babes and sucklings are to perfect the praises."

The mother once more thanked the minister, kissed the children, and went to her own little graves. The sinking sun illuminated the slender monument and her face. Gilbert had listened without a word, but, after all were gone, he said:

"The graveyard holds more of beautiful things and beautiful thoughts than all the world beside! These are the divinest poems. There is more of sublimity in that woman yonder and her twenty-five years than in all the cantos of Homer. Why should I bring a sad face here? It ought not to be hard for a Christian to lie down where the children sleep so sweetly. It is God's conservatory. The minister had his lilies and his babes so mixed up in his metaphors that it was difficult to tell which he was talking about. But those two mothers know—the one who mourned a quarter of a century ago and the one who mourns to-day still side by side. And then there is the third mother, my own, who has already recovered her babe and is enjoying the garlands of lilies up yonder. Thus God has two conservatories, the hopeful graveyard and the land where there are no graveyards."

CHAPTER XIII.

Decoration Day.

The day was all that could have been desired. Earth and sky seemed to unite in the celebration. A softness was in the air like the softness of mellowed memories.

If the nineteenth century had brought nothing of new beauty except this genial custom, it would not have lived in vain. In it civilization has honored itself.

"There was a garden and in the garden a new sepulchre." We thank Thee, Beloved Disciple, for that one touch to the everlasting record. Were holy flowers blooming there to remind of the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys?

I know no tenderer poesy than the poesy of treasured graves enwreathed in memorial blossoms.

As the day drew near, many had been thinking faithful thoughts, and they came with hearts as fragrant as the flowers.

Thousands North and South were mindful of the brave soldiers encamped beneath the sod. But many a little grave which had never heard of war was remembered just as loyally.

The gates were thrown wide as by the expectant dead. Is it not so that they await us at the celestial gates?

And many came—and still they came, the unforgetting ones—and brought their tributes and arranged them tastefully. Taste, the divine gift, never knew gentler vocation. Here it becomes evangel and prophet.

All ages bring contributions for favorite spots. The old, the youthful, and the child know where the best-loved lie. And all are akin to-day.

Thus they fill the hill, as when in Judean days they filled the Temple area at the Feast of Palms.

Among all the visitors, Gilbert knows where the wearer of the white sunbonnet will be—dressed, probably, in other garb to-day. But at what grave will the vestal of the won-

derful voice be found? And whose resting-place will Cousin Margaret be adorning?

It was singular that he had never seen the latter two by any tomb, and it was singular that he had never thought of this before. From what the little girls had said of the one, and what he had heard in the chapel from the other, they both must have had chastened memories in their hearts to uplift and sanctify.

Of course, Mattie and Margie were at their post, hands and affections full. The short graves will not be forgotten to-day. Gilbert thought there was no pathos more touching than the subdued movements of his children. No contributed flowers were fairer than these human flowers. They helped Gilbert and he helped them in beautifying the two sacred hillocks in which the three had become joint-proprietors.

"After the speaking," said Mattie, "we have set our hearts on your becoming acquainted with Cousin Margaret. She is out here now, prettier and sweeter than ever."

"I think it 's time," asserted Margie. "You are both old enough to marry, goodness knows. You are both awful pokey!"

The two accomplished match-makers left him and went off to assist another group of youngsters in their amiable work. The children were the cherubs of the landscape.

Gilbert thought he could love anybody whom his little girls loved.

After a while, with the entire enclosure now one garden of blooms, the large assembly began to converge at the chapel. It too had its profusion of flowers. They looked as cheerful as if meant for the brow of a bride. You would have noticed that the faces of the visitors were almost as shadowless as the faces of the lilies.

A gentleman of pleasing address read the following tribute to the originators of the attractive cemetery:

"The smell of the flowers is the voice of our praise
To those in whose bosoms this fair scene began;
The dream of calm nights, the scheme of bright days,

Until there emerged the beautiful plan—
A shrine where rainbow'd tears are shed,
An honored place for honored dead.

"The smell of the flowers is the language we use
To tell of the gallant, considerate men
Who turn'd from the cares that enrich or amuse
To offer crown'd loves the soul's evergreen—
A shrine where rainbow'd tears are shed,
An honored place for honored dead.

"The smell of the flowers is the incense we bring,
Anointing this morning the bared brow of those
Whose labors whole-hearted our children shall sing;
In whose rare devotion fair Ridge Park arose—
A shrine where rainbow'd tears are shed,
An honored place for honored dead.

"The smell of the flowers is the odor of love,
Enveloping richly the thoughtful and wise,
Who taught our affections to center above,
And link earthly bosoms to those in the skies—
A shrine where rainbow'd tears are shed,
An honored place for honored dead.

"The smell of the flowers is the fragrance of prayer,
That, when from these earth-damps their sundering shall be,
Their spirits exultant may rise fair and clear,
Their bodies here resting expectantly—
A shrine where rainbow'd tears are shed,
An honored place for honored dead."

Gilbert felt instinctively that he recognized the authorship of the simple but hearty words. It was like her to honor as benefactors of the living those who prepare beautiful resting-places for the dead. Was she in the audience?

By arrangement, Rev. Mr. Blaston delivered the annual address, as follows:

"In his last utterance, an author never commonplace, tells of what he means to be accomplishing after death. He will

work on to the end. Old age shall not suppress his testimonies. While life remains, he will be a witness-bearer, and 'with diligence.' This is sublime!

"But this is not all. He intends to be heard after that. The sublimity grows. He will project himself upon the future. He means to be felt after he is seen no more. 'I will endeavor after my decease that ye may have these things always in remembrance.' (2 Pet. 1:16.) He has achieved his ambitions. Crucifixion could not break his power. For eighteen hundred years he has been in a grave, as silent as any of these around us. But the Apostle is still a vital force. Living or dying, there was no dead-line!

"There is an earthly immortality. There is a post-mortem energy. There is a posthumous existence. Graveyards are vitalizing. Every tomb out yonder is a pulpit.

"No, no; our dead are not dead! Their principles and purposes survive. The dead live! It is the mightiest of all life. They live in potent, unfading influences which they set in play while on earth; they live in enduring impressions; live in deeds yet being done; live in prayers yet being answered; live in their books; live in God's covenant. They live in you!

"The most potent, impelling force on earth to-day is its dead. To them the world is more deeply indebted than to all its surviving millions. The dead made the nations. The dead made the Church of God. They shaped the past, and the past is shaping the future.

"Yes; what a power is Peter, in life and precept, long after his decease. And Moses still writes and speaks; David still sings; Isaiah still illuminates the future; Paul still preaches. The Bible itself, with all its increasing potency, is the voice of dead men. Nay, inspect what the Son of Man has Himself been accomplishing after His decease!

"Who can reckon to-day our obligations to the dead? Memories are the mightiest of momentums.

"The good King of Damascus had passed away. A cruel despot occupied the palace. The suffering people cried along the streets, 'O Neuradin, O Neuradin, arise and pity and protect us!' The bloody tyrant blushed and trembled on his throne. Neuradin still reigned!

"When Constantine the Great died in his capital, they dressed him in royal purple, put the golden crown upon his head, placed the jeweled scepter in his hand, and kept the honored corpse for many days in the effulgent chair of state. Daily filed before him the magnates of the empire, bowing the knee. Constantine still reigned!

"Dying upon lonely St. Helena, Napoleon begged of his captors that his body might sleep in bonny France. They cruelly refused. They were afraid of the conqueror's arm, though palsied in death. In the after-days the mouldering remains were brought back, and, from the Bay of Biscay to the Rhine, every Frenchman's heart thrilled and applauded and grew strong. Napoleon still reigned!

"And there are sleepers in these grounds whose hands hold golden scepters. They shape and mould us. They mingle in our hopes and fears. We cannot get away from our dead. They still reign!

"God and the years permit no good influence to die. Spiritual force is immortal. Buried fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, friends, and the little children still touch and permeate the issues of life. We are heirs of possibilities made by them. They bequeathed a radiant future—we are the legatees. They have left us millionaires in opportunities.

"And the force is cumulative. God conserves the might of past generations. They will go on stimulating the present and the future. The good and the true are perpetuated. Here is the hope of the world.

"Thus we remain allied with the armies of the redeemed. We are their proxies. We are their mouthpieces. If worthy of them, through us they will go on acting and achieving. Our sepulchered loves will inspire and impel and teach the way of victory.

"Stirring questions meet us here. What will we too be doing after our decease? Shall the memories left behind be a spur to duty and to purity? Shall our lives and our deaths shine upon the horizon as beneficent beacons for future voyagers? Our own graves, dug here after awhile, shall they be eloquent for truth and righteosuness?"

And now the unexpected was about to happen. There was a strong tension upon every fibre of Gilbert's being. What had been done and said had been bringing his mother very close to him. All these things were enough to awaken the profounder susceptibilities of such a nature.

The young man had been playing with his imagination for some weeks. He had really not thought seriously of his vacillating fancies nor known fully whither they were tending. The triple romances had afforded entertainment in his loneliness and been in various ways breaking the thralldom of a morbid grief. Each of the three maidens had been doing him good, and drawing him back to a salutary interest in life. Now imagination itself was to meet a surprise.

His little girls were led to the platform, some of the flowers which he had given them upon their bosoms. Had angel ideals appeared, Mattie and Margie must have looked very much like them. Gilbert had always been a chivalrous admirer of little girls. But now his eyes were fixed in astonishment and emotion upon her who led them forward. Thus they sang:

"We hail our friends across the line,
Who loved and served and fell
Along the paths where duty led;
Hail and farewell!

"Awhile the wounded sighs are heard,
And severed hearts rebel,
But shorter seems the distance now;
Hail and farewell!

"The cradle slumbers by the grave,
Age hears the funeral knell,
While watchers wait beside the Throne;
Hail and farewell!

"And soon the Decoration Days,
Spread wide o'er hill and dell,
Shall bring the Coronation Morn;
Hail and farewell!"

Sometimes children's voices seem to be sounding as if from the open portals. So now it seemed to many. But dear as these little charmers were to Gilbert, and however charming now, his eye and ear were under a deeper spell.

The face of the maiden who attended the children was the face of which he had caught glimpses under the white sunbonnet, features now of unveiled and resplendent loveliness; and the voice with which she encouraged them was the wonderful voice to which he had listened spell-bound in the chapel. The two mystic damsels were one and the same. He found himself in a maze of enchantment.

However brilliant its visions, Romance is blind as a bat at times. So all the books show.

Why had he never suspected before? Has not the reader easily foreseen it? And now if each of these, separately and as rivals, had fascinated the young dreamer, how could he meet combined the winsome countenance with its halo of white sentiment by Martha's grave, and the remembered musical utterances so full of pure sentiment and sweet inspiration?

In which is there more of character, the face or the voice? How irresistible if both are full of music! And what would his mother now say of her boy?

The exercises were now over, and he turned to make his way from the crowd. He wished to be alone, to think and to take his bearings. What freaks was destiny playing him! No one would intrude by his mother's grave. He wanted to be alone with her.

The little girls and their attendant had passed out at another door, and, in turning the corner of the building, the four met face to face. He could not avoid complimenting the young songsters.

"I did not know you could sing," he said. "I wonder what else you can do? You sang like nightingales."

"It was all Cousin Margaret," answered Mattie. "She made the words and tune, too, and she taught us to sing it. Mr. What's-your-name, this is Cousin Margaret."

"My name is Gilbert Wayne," he said, bowing confusedly, astonishment again mastering him.

"And mine is Miss Vertner," she responded, and in all her incomparable richness of tone. "My gentle cousins were determined to force the acquaintance."

"You both wanted it," answered the irrepressible Margie. "I have no patience with pokey lovers!"

The nymph of the sunbonnet, the improvisatrice of the chapel, and the children's ideal cousin, a trinity in one! Three crystal streams were converging.

"You see," exclaimed the thoughtful Mattie, "I was named for Cousin Martha in yonder grave, and Margie was named for Cousin Margaret."

"And now, Mr. Wayne," said Margie, with quizzical dignity, "you may call Mattie and me cousins, too, if you want to. We 'll adopt you."

A sympathetic sunset illuminated all the hills, and Decoration Day had passed into history; but, like its dead, it was to live.

CHAPTER XIV.

Comfort in Duty.

"The chapel is ready for 'em," said the old sexton, in soliloquy. "The angels will ring the weddin'-bells, and perhaps the dead are listenin' for 'em.

"Our two friends were a long time about it, but now it 's completed, the job 's a good one. Yonder two cedars didn't grow in a day, but they are tough wood now, and can stand the winters. Charon was consulted, but wouldn't interfere. Too many cooks spoil the broth. The fun in courtin' is in doin' it all oneself.

"Graveyards make us thoughtful and lovin'. They open people's hearts like openin' flowers, and turn them warm and fonder. Sympathy is mighty close to somethin' tenderer.

"It seems to me this way: Those that come out here are one great family. They have traveled the same road and been hurt by the way. There have been tears on their cheeks. Every heart has its wounds. They look across their lots and feel akin to one another. They know that they are made alike and have suffered alike. In sorrow they are brothers and sisters.

"You see that the lots are not far apart. In life people may keep their distance, but death brings them close together, and to the same level. Thus old and young and rich and poor are neighbors here.

"They know that after awhile they are all comin' to stay. They are layin' their treasures here against that day. And then, after another waitin'-time, they all expect to rise from these graves together. Why should they not feel gentle and pitiful and neighborly? Thus visitors out here begin to like one another before they know it.

"In this way the graves of Martha Vertner and of Mrs. Wayne set two bosoms to singin' the same song. When I filled those graves, I knew that a good wife was standin' by the one and a good husband by the other. I can tell them by the way they love their dead Character comes out in the weepin'-time.

"With these two, the fellow-feelin' soon begun to fly across the grounds. The vibrations somehow showed that they were made for each other. The tombs said never a word,

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and yet all the time the tombs were talkin'. And Martha did not object, and his mother did not object, but rather encouraged it—for they each one needed the other. The baby brother was assistin', too; and the two little sisters, you see; and the God of the graveyard did the rest. And so they have worked it out. Graves break tender ties, but graves sometimes make 'em, too. They are a power in the world.

"Yonder are the two at the gate. They keep each other company out here now. There was no fuss in their mournin'; there is no fussiness in the matin'-time. They behave very modestly—cooin' only a little, like turtle-doves. There is a cemetery law that the foundations of every monument be laid as deep as the grave; that is the way these two seem to be buildin' their foundations now."

They entered the enclosure and went to the lot where Gilbert had thought his heart was buried. It was happiness to have her with him there. She had on the white dress and coquettish white sunbonnet; for to him no royal robes were ever so beautiful. As if for one mother, they worked the soil together, one thought, one aim. The white rose was in its glory.

"Because of your own whiteness," he said, "I selected that rose. Little knew I then that the whiteness of my life, of its hopes and endeavors, was to be conserved by the wearer of the snowy raiment across the way."

"And I knew well," she answered, "that one upon whom a sainted mother held perpetual sway was one to be trusted. No woman need be afraid of such a son. From my little cousins, too, I discovered that he it was who had looked after Martha's flowers in my absence."

"Those dear little creatures," he said with enthusiasm, "are the good genii of the graveyard. They helped me out of the partial eclipse of my faith, the losing battle which I was waging with the All-Wise. Thus God perfects through the children other praises as well as their own. And then these delightful little intermediaries never rested until they brought the three fascinations of my life into an irresistible unit."

"They interested me," she continued, "in this sacred sepulcher and the unforgotten mother, and thereby in her saddened boy. Tracing influences a little further, had it not been for the baby-brother sleeping yonder, you and I would probably have never met. Children, living and dead, have changed many destinies. There is not a short grave in this garden of tombs that has not left its impress upon immortal souls."

Her voice had the luster of the resurrection in it. He plucked one of the white roses and pinned it upon her bosom. They passed across to her sister's grave—to be his own sister henceforth.

"I wish I could have known her," he said. "The children tell me that she was like you; that she was very beautiful. She, too, had her part in bringing us together. Thus in many and various ways we are indebted to the dead. Surely we ought to live in a way that would please them."

"We were twins," said Margaret; "she by far the better and lovelier of the two. It is not wrong that God should take our best and ripest first, His way of filling the garner. She was our brother's ideal of all that is worthiest and noblest on earth."

"This reminds me of an interesting episode," he remarked, "my first fit of jealousy when I saw such admiration and devotion to you that I thought him the favored suitor. I was very obtuse, for I was wondering over something familiar in his graceful manner, and was trying to find of whom he reminded me in the past, when it was you that he resembled. I am prepared to love him now, because through him and the frolicsome breeze I caught sight of the fairest face that was ever veiled in a sunbonnet."

"He liked you," she answered with a smile in the voice as well as about the lips, "and he means to be at the wedding."

That the betrothed should seek the chapel together was to be expected. The dainty Gothic structure had no unimportant part in the drama.

"Here I outrageously eavesdropped the mysterious prophetess," he confessed. "Three times I overheard the vestal within the sacred precincts. Woman need not invade the pulpit to sway the earth."

"The prophetess was not sufficiently inspired," she replied, "to know that she had an outside listener. But are there not scores of shrines all over these grounds from which, in many a heart-hour, far holier revelations may be heard?"

"To revolutionize my life," he spoke, solemnly, "two impressive oracles have come to me; one from the dead, one from the living. Mingling, they have convinced me irresistibly that there is a serener upland than any where self is supreme; that to live for others, to make men holier, and thereby to increase the sum of human happiness, is the best of living. My mother helping and my Margaret helping, the weak ought to become strong. The path of duty I am finding to be the path of consolation."

"I knew this was coming," and she spoke with the light of the redeemed in her eyes. "The selfish world has its votaries in throngs; you are not needed there. Earth's multitudes must be purified and uplifted. And they are yet to die; they will fill the graveyards. It will be glorious to dispel the funeral shadows and irradiate the cemeteries with Gospel hope."

"My business is prospering," he said, "and promises well. I am in sight of assured successes. My profession is an honorable one, and will not be without opportunities for benefiting my contemporaries. But this would be a side-issue; the main aim would be the gaining of wealth and honor. There is only one profession where the entire time and thought and energy can be given directly to the service of the Master and the work of saving souls."

"I felt that this too was coming," she replied. "When nobly directed and impelled, I know nothing more beautiful than the ambitions of young men. They shine among the splendors; and when they go out toward God, they take on superlative luster. 'Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?' Thus spoke the young man's Exemplar."

What mellowed force in that voice now—how compelling, and yet how essentially feminine! He had heard those tones in this room before, but without the added spell of that beaming countenance. He was silent, refusing to break the charm. After a little, she continued:

"I suspect that you have been listening to other graves in the cemetery. These promoted ambassadors of God, though ascended, have been speaking to you amid the silences. They have gone and left vacancies. The pulpits miss them. The vineyard pleads for recruits. On whom shall their mantle fall? Who shall take up the work? You have listened to the divine call, and are replying: 'Here I am; send me.'"

Again there was silence and again he waited. It is woman whom God uses to make His best ministers. The thrush in the poplar filled the interval with song. In variations as sweet as his, she spoke again and most gently:

"The field is as large as the needs of a fallen race. There will be burdens to be lightened; bowed hearts awaiting comfort; the poor to be cared for; the dying to be cheered; the bereaved to be gladdened; lost thousands to be led heavenward. In the path may be sacrifice, toil, privation, ingratitude, detraction, soreness of heart; but I will be with you to share it all, and your mother, too, and God."

He took a paper from his pocket and handed it to her, saying with suppressed emotion:

"Margaret, my star, read that. I found it in a package of sacred keepsakes to-day."

She took it from his hand and read reverently as follows:

"My son, when this meets your eye, I shall have been some while among the glorified. I do not want you to read it amid the first pains of grief when I seem too far away; but afterward, when the calm has come and you have felt that God did right in taking me. All this will be in time, and then you will be ready to weigh my words pleasantly.

"In the cradle I dedicated you to the Gospel ministry. Since that hour it has been my daily prayer and expectation. I am sure it will come. Mothers have the gift of prophecy sometimes.

"Heretofore I would not tell you of my hope, lest I touch the ark of God rashly. I would not interfere with the prerogative of the Great Head of the Church in calling His messengers. But when you have heard His call, and ordaining hands are to be laid upon your brow, it will be pleasing for you to know that your mother's hands, with consecrating prayer, have been laid there first.

"And the mother's pains in bringing a man into the world, and all her anxieties and intercessions, shall not have been in vain. God will qualify and equip you. He has given you brain and character and warmth of heart, and He will give the needed grace. Live for Him and for the people. Duty will enliven the way and you will be comforted.

"Again I speak as one that prophesies. You will not go to the work unattended. God will take care of that. She will be one after my own heart—such as King Lemuel idealized when taught by his mother. She will not be without beauty, a mirror of excellences, a fountain of refreshment. I see her as if clothed in white linen, the righteousness of saints.

"Prize her as God's gift. Trust her, love her fully, listen to her when you feel the absence of your mother. And she shall do thee good, and not evil, all the days of thy life."

No sound had been heard while she read. Tears like pearls had dropped from her cheek upon the paper. He took her hand and led her to a green grave which they both loved, not far away.

"When my mother was painting your portrait," he said, "undoubtedly she was thinking, too, of the good woman who reposes beneath this mound—a minister's helpmeet and the people's ideal. She was a great woman in Israel, and yet

she was as simple-hearted as a little girl. She was a queen, and yet a child. Wherever she lived, all communities loved her. She was an undimmed transparency through which shone perpetually a superior soul. She was a leader, but glad to follow anyone who showed a better way. Being dead, she yet speaketh. Said one who knew her well: 'I felt her then and I feel her yet lifting me to a purer life.' Thus her name and fame are like Mary's broken alabaster box, the odor filling the house. And, like all mothers, my mother inhaled the fragrance. When she went, her preacher-husband limped upon the road like one lamed and maimed."

We wish we could put upon this page the soul-melody in the answer:

"With reverence and aspiration I lay my hand upon this monument like one taking an oath. I know no supremer mission for woman than to uphold the hands of an ambassador of God. The parsonage becomes a palace."

"Duty grows transporting," he said. "The vistas light up and I read the sign on the finger-post, 'Twain one flesh.' It is exalting when the graves of our dead as well as the hearts of the living are pronouncing benedictions upon the banns. These scenes will take part some day at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, the Heavenly Bridegroom and His Bride. Meanwhile the earthly symbol of that wedding-feast is ours —the plighting and the expectancy. Ridge Park points forward to-day and seems to say, 'Blessed among women be the elect of a dying mother, the ideal of little girls, the white emblem of purity, Margaret the minister's wife.'"

Just then Mattie and Margie came in, throwing the petals of white roses all over them and saying:

"We are to be the flower-girls at the wedding. We are practicing."

"I was named for your mother as well as for our buried cousin," said Mattie. "I 've just found that out from the family Bible."

"And our baby brother was named Gilbert," said Margie; "named for you—so Charon says. We used to call him our preacher. You will have to preach his sermons."

The thrush was flinging out his farewell minstrelsy, sparkling with the sunset, and the old Lombardy poplar went on pointing heavenward.

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